# Winning or Losing

A Story of the West Virginia Hills

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# WINNING OR LOSING?

## A Story of the West Virginia Hills.

By OREN F. MORTON

AUTHOR OF

"Under the Cottonwoods"

KINGWOOD, W. VA.

Published by the Author.

1901

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*Sincell Printing Company,*
*Oakland, Md.*

To ALL who have subscribed for this book through a desire to encourage literary effort among their own people.

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# PREFACE

Books of West Virginia authorship are few. Especially is this the case in the field of general literature.

The purpose of the present sketch is twofold. It is to trace a turning-point in the career of an individual. It is also to give a portraiture of present-day life in the Alleghany highlands. This subsidiary aim is the author's defense for introducing what might seem a needless number of characters.

The thought of writing a work of this kind did not originate with the author himself. The idea was suggested by a friend. On the part of many other persons also, there was a prompt, hearty, and substantial encouragement. Yet it has not been practicable for the author to give to the preparation of the volume the amount of time he deemed requisite.

The writer has an extensive acquaintance with the territory wherein the scenes of the story are laid. The first names of the characters are chosen from among those which are most frequent in the particular region under survey. But in the case of surnames, he has been at some pains to avoid those of local occurrence.

Grateful acknowledgment is here offered to all who have in any way contributed to the success of the undertaking.

OREN F. MORTON

July 12, 1901

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"O THE WEST VIRGINIA HILLS" Phot'd by C. S. Rexroad

# WINNING OR LOSING?

## I

### An Introduction to the Hills

> There is an emanation from the heart in genuine hospitality which cannot be described, but is immediately felt, and puts the stranger at once at his ease.—*Washington Irving.*

Like the bail of a pot resting at a moderate angle, a public highway described a semicircle around the face of a huge knob. Yet the road did not pursue a uniform curve. It constantly veered either to the right or the left, and the bordering rail fence never kept a straight course more than a few yards at a time. The narrow bank on either side of the stony roadway was covered with weeds, brushes, boulders, tufts of grass, and an occasional shrub or tree, the latter being often a cherry or a seedling apple.

In one of the angles of the highway, and on the descending slope, was a one-story house. The walls were of boards laid up and down and battened. Much of the last coat of whitewash had scaled off, causing the dwelling to look very gray. The windows were small, as were also the panes of glass, and the cleat doors had been painted a dark brown. The mossy shingles were deeply discolored by the weather, and were so warped and splintered that it would not seem as though the roof could possibly be tight. In the middle of the side toward the road was a small porch,

and under it were two doors placed very near together. In the very narrow front yard were a few shrubs and flower plants. But the palings in the fence were in as bad condition as the shingles on the roof.

Below the farmhouse the ground fell away in a moderate slope toward a deep and thickly wooded hollow. Above the highway the ground rose with a sharper incline toward the plateau crowning the invisible summit of the knob. On this acclivity were huge boulders, sometimes cubic in form. Their vertical sides were seamed with longitudinal fissures, while on their flattish tops grew a scanty covering of bushes and grass.

On the same side of the road was a weather-beaten spring house, whence a tiny rivulet flowed through a long spout into a trough made by hollowing out a log. On lower ground was a decrepit log barn, and within the open door could be seen the tails of a span of bay horses. They were eating hay and their harnesses were on their backs. Above the barn was a corn crib, the capacity of which would not exceed a hundred bushels of ears.

Next the road was a pig-pen, and poking out from between the lower boards could be seen a row of white snouts, suggestive of two-spotted dominoes. Their owners gave an occasional squeal as a hint that their morning rations had not been enough. In the pasture beyond were several cows, all nibbling at the tender grass except the nearest, who was rubbing her dewlap against a rail. In the roadway was a turkey gobbler striding around a rooster and trying in vain to get a fight out of him, while in the wet ditch were several white ducks poking their shovel bills into the mud.

At the edge of the road stood a farm wagon, and the owner was trying to loosen a bolt. His name was Buskirk. He was large in frame and rather stout. His hair and mustache were sandy and his face was freckled. His tan-colored blouse and overalls were patched in some places and torn, frayed, and frizzled in others. During their term of service they had absorbed a generous amount of grease and dirt. The straw hat of the farmer was gray from the combined effects of sweat, dust, and weather, and the broad brim lopped at one side.

Two grown sons, Sherman and Keener, were standing by the wagon and were clad in much the same manner as their parent. A fourth person, intermediate in age between the farmer and his sons, was holding one foot on a decaying stump and resting an elbow on his knee. He also was the owner of a freckled face and a sandy mustache. He wore a brown sweater and a dark coat. This man was Abner Dodrill, a son-in-law.

Buskirk jarred the wagon frame and muttered with impatience. Near him was a well grown hog sitting on his haunches in the ditch, and his grunts were perhaps to encourage the farmer in the efforts to dislodge the stubborn bolt.

"Got your corn ground shaped up yet?" inquired Dodrill.

"Not quite," returned Buskirk after he had dropped a discharge of tobacco juice. "There's a little more filth to clear off before we can plow the field. Sherm got the scythe all busted out of shape."

"Keener, what you going to do with that beast o' yourn?" was Dodrill's next question.

"Trade him off, I reckon."

"Why don't you take him to the blacksmith and have a set of cast-iron teeth put in him? Then you might sell him for a three yer old. He's a hundred and five yers old to-morrow, but he can jump a ten-rail fence, guaw the rust off'n a water pipe, and kick the stuffing out of a hay rake."

"He's the ornriest beast I ever hearn tell of," grumbled Keener. "I had to swat him right the other day. I was hauling out a sled-load of rock, and he stopped right short, and the sled was drug down to where I started it from."

"Why didn't you hook 'im on with his nose next the sled?" asked Abner.

"He'd still gone the way I didn't want him to."

"This is the dogdest, hardest bolt to get out I ever see," grumbled the farmer, drawing a long breath. "It's all chugged up some way. Go find the axe, Sherm. I lent it agen the barn. We're bound to make these running gears furder apart. Too short yet fer them poles to load on well. Keener, put one o' them spawls under the fore wheel. The wagon is sliding into the ditch."

"Ker-whack, ker-whack. Ch-ch-ch-chit-chit-chit."

Some guinea hens had taken alarm at the the approach of a stranger and ran screaming across the highway.

"Who can that hairpin be?" observed Keener glancing up the road.

"Can't be Jack Loman, can it?" suggested his brother.

"Don't walk like Jack," declared the farmer after giving the approaching man a very casual glance.

Abner Dodrill now squared around so as to survey the object. He very soon shook his head.

"It's no one belongs round here. He carries a grip, don't you see?"

"Might be Hoback's brother-in-law that's come on from the West," remarked Keener.

"No, it's not that fellow," was Abner's confident reply.

These conjectures were interrupted by the near approach of the stranger.

He was a man of about twenty-six. He wore a suit of faded brown and carried an umbrella and a battered valise. His complexion was light, his eyes were blue, and his thick, reddish brown hair was considerably inclined to curl. His features were good, although a mustache would have improved the looks of his clean shaven face. His manner was quiet and his voice somewhat low. His face had an air of self-distrust with also a suspicion of the timidity which is not due to a lack of courage but of confidence. The expression of his features was frank, and it was plain that he took things in earnest; that he meant what he said and expected as much in others. And although it was his habitual inclination to look on the bright side of things, he would not have been set down as an habitual joker.

"Is this Mr. Buskirk?" he inquired, addressing the man at the wagon.

"Just Buskirk without the mister," replied the farmer banging away at the bolt.

"Then you are the one I wanted to see," remarked the newcomer.

"Guess I don't know you," observed Buskirk, giving the stranger another sidelong glance but revealing no apparent interest in the matter.

The other men had nodded to the new arrival, and they were surveying him from head to foot.

"Stranger round here, ain't you?" suggested Abner in his easy, self-possessed way.

"Yes, this is my first day in this section."

"What might be your name?" continued the man in the sweater.

"Thornwood."

"Any relation to the Thornwoods over back of the Tunnel?" pursued Abner.

"I don't know of any relations at all in this region."

"Come from Pennsylvania?"

"No, sir."

"From Ohio?"

"Yes, northern Ohio."

In his last reply Thornwood showed a slight degree of irritation. He turned questioner himself.

"No any of you know of a job of work?"

Buskirk smiled grimly.

"Very little public works in this county. None at all close by me. Nothing else much, except our farm work, and we don't hire no big amount of help round here."

To Thornwood it looked as though he had fallen into unsympathetic hands. He was not only weary but he was ill at ease. He thought the farmer showed a supreme indifference to his question. The young men continued to regard the new comer in silence, and Abner took advantage of a pause to resume his interrogatories.

"Come from Kingwood?"

"No, sir."

"Couldn't have come all the way from Morgantown this morning?" persisted the examiner.

"Why not?" demanded Buskirk. "I've did that very thing aready. Left there 'fore sunup and got here 'fore dinner."

"I came with a man carrying a load of goods from the station. I left him just this side of a little village."

"Come from the Tunnel up to Howesville then?" suggested Abner.

"Yes, that was the place."

"Was he a tall-like man with a long gray beard?"

"No, he was about your size, except that his mustache was redder."

"Did he drive a sorrel team?"

"No, it was a white one."

"You say he was coming from the Tunnel this time of day? Didn't give you his name?"

"Yes, but I can't think of it just now."

"Was it Marley?"

"No."

"Krouse?"

"No."

"Did he drive a buggy?"

"No, he had a load of goods."

"I don't just figure that out," declared Abner.

"Might 'a ben Si Swiger moving onto the Dorr place," suggested Keener.

"Couldn't ben him," declared the parent. He's got moved afore now."

Still other conjectures were offered, but as they were quashed like so many defective indictments, the problem of the teamster's identity was reluctantly dismissed.

"Ever teach, or clerk, or do anything of that sort?" asked Abner.

"Yes, I've taught two terms and I've clerked a little."

"Got a right good education, I reckon?"

"Common school training; nothing more."

"Might strike a school a little later in the year," continued Abner.

"O yes, you might strike into something after a bit," added Buskirk.

"But it's the waiting that bothers me."

"Then why not go over the mountain and peel bark?" proposed Abner. "Horner and Brady have a big contract for bark and they've advertised for hands. It won't last long, the peeling won't, but it will keep down expenses and give you a chance to inquire round."

"I'll do that," was the response.

"Perhaps we can put you on to something," continued Abner. "I'll keep a lookout for you. There's not much going on I don't hear of some way."

"You are very kind, I am sure," said the stranger.

"O that's nothing. But were you going to Kingwood?"

"Well, yes, that was the idea."

"Wouldn't found much over there; not without a power of waiting," observed Buskirk.

"How far is it to the bark peeling?" asked Thornwood.

"Something near twelve miles," replied the other.

"Whew, then I better be going."

"No need to be in a rush," remarked the farmer. "Stay and have a bite to eat. It's after eleven now. You'll have plenty time then to get over there. You can't walk without something to walk on."

"You might not strike a chance just at dinner time," put in Abner.

The newcomer was too wonderstruck to make immediate response. That Buskirk should invite him to dinner was an utter surprise. The farmer had been very ready to make discouraging observations and he had appeared to regard him with decided indifference. Dodrill seemed to show more curiosity than sympathy.

"Well, all right," said the stranger after he had found his tongue.

"Go up to the house and make yourself at home—unless you choose to set here awhile," continued Buskirk.

"Let's set down on this log," proposed Abner. "It's just as cheap to set as to stand."

The two men now occupied a log which had been lying by the roadside a dozen years. Thornwood remained uncommunicative, but Dodrill took it upon himself to do the talking.

"Powerful long tunnel down there where you got off the train," he remarked. "Biggest on the line. Lays over two hundred feet down under from the top of that hill. Three air shafts in it. They didn't fence 'em in till a man fell in one night. Drunk probably. Several days before he was found. Along back-a-ways, there was a number of Maine people in this country. They was all in the timber business; getting out shooks and so on. Some o' them fellows kept a shook shop and a store over beyond here some piece. Done a heap o' business, too. Hardly one of them in this country now. They used up the best of the shook timber and then quit. Howesville was

named for one o' them. He got killed on the railroad by accident."

At length Buskirk turned to Thornwood with the remark: "Now, stranger, we'll go up to the house and pile in some grub."

The farmer led the way to the side entrance, which was close to a stone chimney. He took an empty wash-basin from an outdoor washstand made by nailing a piece of board to the top of a short post.

"Will you have hot water or cold?" inquired Buskirk.

"Cold water will do all right for me."

"Just as well have hot water if you like."

The stranger again demurred to causing his host needless trouble, and the farmer poured water into the basin until it was nearly full. A towel hung on a nail near the kitchen door. Before the newcomer was done washing, a woman opened the door, whisked the towel out of sight, and put a clean one in its place.

"You'll find comb and brush under that glass up by the door. There's a towel hanging there," said Buskirk after seeing that his guest had made an end of mopping his face and hands.

When the former had completed his own toilet he opened the door.

"Come in," he said.

Thornwood found himself in an apartment which served as both dining room and kitchen. A woman and a grown girl were busy with the preparations for dinner. The stranger nodded to them and they returned the salutation in equal silence. He stood near the door expecting an introduction by Buskirk,

but none was forthcoming to decide the probability that the females were wife and daughter.

"Just walk on into the other room," said the man of the house.

Buskirk crossed the room, opened a door, and motioned his guest to enter.

The sitting-room was a more inviting place than Thornwood expected to see. On the floor was a rag carpet, the woof concealing the warp, and showing alternating belts of red and green. The walls were papered, except on the side next the kitchen, where the board partition was painted a light brown. The upper joists were in full view, but the whitewash on the ceiling looked quite clean and fresh. The two windows were screened by lace curtains, and before one of them was a small table on which were pots of geraniums and other house plants. In one corner of the room was an organ and in another was an old-fashioned bedstead. An embroidered quilt formed the outermost layer of the bedclothes, and embroidery also occurred on the covers of a pair of supernumerary pillows. On a stand were a picture album, two autograph albums, and a few books. On the walls were several pictures and mottoes. Above the fire grate was a clock.

The farmer dropped into one of the two easy chairs and insisted that his guest should take the other. He now became talkative and began to discuss the news of the day. Thornwood soon discovered that his host had a more comprehensive grasp of current events than was true of himself. If the farmer read less, he had less to read. But he thought on what he did read, and his opinions were generally just.

Abner and the young men remained in the kitchen.

The girl came twice into the kitchen to take dishes and cups of jelly from a cupboard.

"Dinner's ready," she said opening the door the third time.

"Now come on," said Buskirk clapping his hands on the arms of his rocker and then jumping up and striding toward the table. "Just take that end seat, stranger. Abner, take that chair on yon side next to him. I gen'rally put kids like you over there."

There was room at the table for the woman and girl, and Thornwood wondered why they did not sit down. After saying grace, Buskirk turned to the newcomer.

"Now, Mr. Thornwood, just make yourself at home. Rech and help yourself. We don't have much style here. When I go to eating, I get too busy to notice anyone but myself. Here's some meat."

And the farmer passed a plate of bacon.

"Do you take sugar and cream in your coffee?" inquired the matron of the family.

Thornwood said he did, and she forthwith handed him the accessories of a well regulated cup of coffee.

The stranger was again surprised. He did not expect to be served to so substantial a dinner. Yet he was not fully aware that in honor of the guest the best tablecloth had been laid, several reserve dishes produced, and the bill of fare otherwise enlarged. He hesitated to help himself to the jams and jellies, because no spoons were placed in them. The other men used their knives for this purpose, and so he concluded to follow a certain well known item of advice and do in Rome as the Romans do.

"Why, you are not eating much. Make out your dinner. Have some more bread," urged Buskirk, as he saw his guest laying down his knife and fork.

"I've been making out very well," returned Thornwood. "I am not so hungry to-day as I sometimes am."

"Now we'll go in the other room a bit," said Buskirk when he had pushed back his own chair.

"Ever play an organ?" inquired the farmer after they had again been chatting awhile, the door remaining open.

"Yes, sometimes."

"What if you play some for us? The girl that's here is the only one that plays it now, and she don't play so much as she mout. Sherm there, he can fiddle some. Say, you folks done eating out there? Come in afore you rid up the table. We'll have some music."

"Yes, we'll be glad of that," affirmed Mrs. Buskirk. "We don't hear much nowdays."

"Excuse my passing before you," said the girl hastening to open the organ and lay out the few music books that she possessed.

The stranger was a more than passable organist, and he played a few familiar pieces to the delight of the listeners.

"Sherm," said the father, "get your fiddle out. Ab and Bess, get up there and sing, if you are not too full o' dinner. You sing, Mr. Thornwood?"

"Yes, tenor usually."

"Then we'll have a reg'lar quartette," said Buskirk with animation.

Several pieces were sung before the organist rose to look for his hat.

"If you ever get back to this country," said Buskirk, "call again and make it convenient to stay over night. We'll be glad to have you."

"Then we'll have a better chance for some music," added the wife.

"I shall be glad to see you people again," said the visitor. "Good-by."

"Good-by. Call again," responded the farmer.

"Good-by," added mother and daughter.

"I'll go with you a piece and show you the road," said Abner Dodrill. "It's on my way."

The road continued to skirt the brow of the knob, a rail fence, its corners filled with bushes and briars, confining it on the lower side and a wood occupying the acclivity above. After a considerable distance they came to a little basin scooped out of the clay bank at the foot of a slope. Several rills of clear water trickled down from the top of the stratum of clay. The overflow ran under the roadway and came out in a wooden trough fashioned out of a sapling, a part flowing into a spring house and the residue splashing into an earthen crock. A few yards down the bank was a house.

"Here is the best spring in this whole country," said Dodrill rinsing out a tin cup and then passing it full of water to his companion.

"I've never known sweeter spring water than this is," commented Thornwood.

"That's one thing we do have—good water," observed Dodrill. "Pure air is another. We have rocks and a light soil and have to put a good deal of work on our ground. Hard to keep your religion, sometimes, when you plow among these rocks, but when you come to look the thing all over, we have

some compensations. We are too far from good markets, and so we have to raise most of our supplies, but we have plenty to eat and plenty to burn. We sell cattle, wool, and buckwheat, and gather in some loose change by selling butter, eggs, turkeys, chickens, chestnuts, and so on. Never have an entire failure of crops. When early things miss, late things hit it. When things are green and fresh up here, they'll be dried out on the low ground east and west of this mountain country. Our soil is thirsty, but we have lots of showers. You think this country looks rough, but if it wan't throwed up on end the way it is, our coal might be way under ground instead of cropping out where it can be got at. See that black stuff by the side of the road? It's a seven foot vein of coal. We don't burn much wood in this country any more, but digging coal is a hard way to serve the Lord."

After they had walked a long distance farther Dodrill remarked: "There's your path; this one running up the bank to where the fence looks if it ben clum over a good bit. Follow the straight path through the wood. You'll soon come out on a wagon track, and that will bring you to a pair of bars on the edge of a field. Go through and follow the track round on yon side, and that will bring you out on the county road. It's a heap nigher than it is to follow this road all the way round."

Abner Dodrill was again at Buskirk's two days later.

"Hear anything about that fellow that was here Tuesday noon?" inquired Buskirk.

"Nothing much, except he stopped over with Marsh Holbert that night and went on from there."

"What in creation brung him here into the mountains?" demanded Buskirk. "If he wanted something to do, I should think he was going the wrong way for it."

"Well," replied Abner, "business is not very good in them manufacturing towns, and when it comes to holding yourself together, I'd as soon be here as starve in one of them. We can manage to live some way, but when their pay shuts down, they get it right in the neck where the hair is short."

"Seemed a right nice man," observed Mrs. Buskirk.

"Why, yes," affirmed her husband. "He didn't say no more of himself than the law would allow, but I reckon he thought he'd got out in the redbrush. At first, he acted like a coon that's just ben dropped into a cage. Hope he'll find some work. Might be he got sort o' jilted like, and come in here to look him up a girl."

"He made a mash on Bess the first thing," remarked Dodrill in his insinuating manner.

"Now, Ab," protested Bessie with a showing of indignation.

"Why, it's a fact," continued Abner in his aggravating tones, "Bess made eyes at him all the time he's here. The color come in yer face as soon as I spoke of him. Why, you wouldn't let yer ma go in the other room for the fruit. Clyde Cosner will have to go some place else now."

"Clyde Cosner," echoed the girl with a disdainful sniff.

"Certainly," persisted the tormentor. "No use in you trying to crawl out of the fact that you are dead struck on him. Clyde ain't in it now at all. Sha'n't

I tell you all the nice things this other fellow said of you?"

"H'm. Suppose I'd believe anything from such a gas as you be?"

"That will do to say, Bess, but you will be mad at me till the next change of the moon, if I didn't tell all the compliments he passed on you. He likes chuffy girls."

"Haw, haw," laughed Buskirk. "The idea of calling Bess chuffy."

"He didn't say any nice things," declared the girl. "I won't believe you if you's to tell 'em."

"Now, Bess, you know you'd punch my head if you didn't get to hear the pretty things he said about mountain daisies."

"Couldn't mash your head. It's too soft for anything. Ain't nothing in it."

"Well, sis, I'm going over toward Morgantown next week and I'll look the fellow up. He'll come back. I'll put a bug in his ear."

"A potato bug," suggested Bessie.

"No, a yellow jacket will do better. It'll fetch him. Why, didn't he say he'd be glad to see you again? Why, Bess, he meant that just for you. See there, will you. See how it raises the color on her cheek and puts the sparkle in her eye just to hear him spoke of."

"Ah, I've got a big mind to slap yer jaw for all that fool talk. How'd you know he ain't got a woman and two or three kids back where he come from?"

"H'm, that won't go, sis. I can tell these old baches as far as I can see 'em. All right, Bess, I'll bring him back soon."

"Needn't go to that trouble, smarty. I won't look at him."

"I've hearn girls talk afore now. By, by. I must go home. Bess, go look in the glass and see what a smile is on your face. Moon-struck, love-struck, Thornwood-struck."

"Ab, you do like to devil me about some old man, don't you now? What a smart fellow you be. Powerful smart. Don't you wish you could sell yourself for what you think you are, instead of what you really are?"

"Yes, course I do," replied the hectorer with a triumphant smile.

As Abner put his hand to the door knob, the girl slipped forward and gave his ear a vigorous cuff, after which she ran laughing to the opposite side of the room.

"That's a warm one," said Abner through the partially open door. "If it was cold weather, I wouldn't need no ear muff."

## II

### The Newcomer is Puzzled

A man's worth is estimated in this world according to his conduct. — *La Bruyere.*

The tract of woodland which the stranger penetrated after leaving Dodrill was as level a spot as may be found in the highlands of West Virginia. It was a plateau forming the summit of a ridge. The larger trees, which were mainly oaks and chestnuts, had been felled and made into lumber or fence rails, and as the standing trees were not yet in leaf, it was possible to look some distance into the forest. Logs in all stages of decay, and plentifully covered with moss and lichen, lay scattered through the woods. Of the young timber, there was a profusion of saplings of bean pole size. A rail fence, well nigh rotten, and nearly smothered by the undergrowth, was evidence that a portion of this land had once been cleared. Rocks, partially screened by moss, were everywhere in view. Some were gray, fissured cubes, some were angular, while still others barely protruded above the level of the ground.

After climbing over a ledge of whitish conglomerate, the stranger came into the road spoken of by Dodrill. He fondly imagined the rest of the way would be easy to find. He had only begun to learn that straightness is not a common characteristic of either the highways or the fences of the Mountain State. The wagon track seemed obstinately inclined to veer about in the direction whence he had come.

"I don't understand all this," grumbled the way-

farer. "I must have got on a by-path somehow. Here's a track that seems to have the right direction. I'll try it, anyway."

But the new path grew more and more faint and led the man into a pasture. It brought him near the brink of a precipice twenty feet high, itself the edge of a bluff towering ten times this altitude above the course of a little creek.

"Well," he thought, "I can't be much lost, but I'll stop a moment and take a look into this deep hollow."

The slope below him was open ground nearly to its base. Several cows were nibbling the young grass. Huge boulders jutted out from the hillside and were bordered by huckleberry bushes and blackberry briars. The small, angular, flattish rocks which numerously littered the ground, offered the suggestion that perhaps other boulders had been splintered and strewn about by the forces of nature. Large quantities of these rocks had been gathered into heaps, and every stump was crowned with as many as could be placed upon it. A few seedling apple trees had grown to maturity, and around each of these was also a mound of rocks. Underneath a chestnut tree were several pieces of wood which had often been used in knocking the burrs off the tree. Near the foot of the slope was a small, vacant log house with an outside chimney. Near it was a picketed inclosure once used as a garden. A foot-path led toward an invisible spring.

Before Thornwood had regained the wagon track he heard the rumble of wheels and presently the voice of a driver.

"Come up here, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob."

The man was whistling by the time Thornwood

had come into the road. The newcomer related his perplexity.

"Why, you's all right," declared the man. "The gate Dodrill told you of ain't a hundred yards back o' me. You can't miss your way from there on down into the county road."

Thus reassured, Thornwood pressed on and soon reached the bars. Two farm gates were subsequently encountered, both of which sagged on the ground, and it was easier to climb over the gates than to drag them open. Inside the first one were several sheep lying against the fence. The mutton-heads took fright at his approach and scampered away.

Near the second gate was a much humbler dwelling than that of Buskirk's, and the stranger wondered for a while whether an acquaintance with this home would prove correspondingly deceptive.

The house, which evidently contained but a single room, had never been painted, and the oak boards were deeply discolored by wind and weather. The still blacker shingles, which were warped and cracked to the utmost extent, had not been laid quite to the ends of the supporting boards. The outside stone chimney barely overtopped the crown of the roof. The two windows toward the road were both very small, yet of uneven size. Inside the open door, the stranger could see that newspapers were pasted upon the wall, and the only adornment visible was a cheap chromo without a frame. A toddling child with a dirty face and still dirtier clothes was resting against a wide board which barricaded the doorway. The premises were treeless and unenclosed and not an effort was made to beautify them. A woman, barefoot and in a very soiled dress, was

hoeing in the garden. She was near enough for the stranger to see a dark looking border around her mouth. He did not then know the cause of such a phenomenon, but after seeing it a few times, he became wiser.

The newcomer was greatly relieved when the devious track brought him to a public road and at a point described by his friend.

"It is past three o'clock," he reflected. "I can't get over there before dark, but I shall rest against this top rail a few moments. I want to take some account of stock as far as I have gone. It is a pretty view before me."

In front of him the ground fell away in more or less uneven undulations and merged into a somewhat extensive depression, diversified by low swelling knobs. These knobs, no less than the lower levels, were usually grass-clad, and bare of trees. Beyond the basin-like valley, the ground steadily rose toward the west, the horizon being fully five miles away. With the increase in elevation came a still more rapid increase in the proportion of woodland. Open fields of irregular outline, like the patches of a crazy quilt. appeared on the slope. For some distance up the lower part of the incline he could trace a winding thoroughfare, and he judged it was the road he would need to follow. Toward the north the view was far-reaching, and the hills melted away in the smoky haze until they receded from view behind the historic line surveyed by Mason and Dixon.

In the near foreground, and so far down a rather gentle declivity that the lower portion of the dwelling was out of sight, was a large, white farmhouse, partially screened by an extensive orchard. From

all he could make out at his point of observation, the dwelling looked very homelike. It was suggestive of a greater degree of comfort than he had yet noticed during the day. Between him and the house was a field in which a man was plowing.

Thornwood resumed his walk, and when abreast of the field he waited for the plowman to come to the end of his furrow. Salutations were then exchanged and the farmer came to the fence of his own accord. He was a few years older than the stranger. He was spare of form and his freckled face was smoothly shaven. When for a moment he removed his hat, his auburn locks were seen to lie in an upward curling roll on the top of his head. The newcomer was beginning to think this hill region specially suited to the production of freckles and red hair.

There had been time for only a few commonplace remarks when a young man drove up the road, halted his team, and broke in on the conversation without ceremony. What he had to say was of the very slightest importance. Twice he gathered up his lines and said it was time to move on, yet he continued to sit with his boot on the fore wheel, talking merely for the sake of talking, and addressing all his remarks to the man inside the fence. Yet during his squirting of tobacco juice he often threw a curious glance in the direction of the stranger. He really wished to learn something about the latter, yet through backwardness he did not institute any examination. Had the farmer been alone, the teamster would have stayed only a few moments. Had there been three men on the ground instead of two, he would have stayed longer than he did, and had he

been older he would have talked with the new arrival.

Thornwood waited until the teamster grew weary of his aimless chat and drove up the hill. Resolving to run no further risk of such interruption, the stranger then asked for directions on his way.

"Why, my friend," was the reply, "it's a good ten miles over there, and the last part of the way is rather troublesome to find. It is four o'clock now. You can't make it before dark and you might be bothered for a chance to get in over night, out there in the redbrush. A fellow wants plenty of daylight on business of that sort. Better stay all night with me and take your time for it in the morning."

"You are very kind, but I feel that I must be getting into some kind of work as soon as I can."

"No use to be in a rush. You won't know the difference in a hundred years from now. I live in the white house down yonder. Holbert is my name; Marsh Holbert, they call me. What might yours be?"

"Thornwood."

"Stranger round here, I reckon. Don't think I've seen you before."

"This is my first day here. I am from northern Ohio."

"Indeed," observed Marsh Holbert with a pleased look. "That's a state I never was in, although I've had quite a curiosity to visit it. I have relations in some parts of the West. I'm a great fellow to read and inquire about places and things I haven't seen for myself."

It was plain that Mr. Holbert would be a very

companionable acquaintance. So without further ado Thornwood accepted the new friend's offer.

"Come out with me to yon end of the field," said Marsh. "Then I will show you up to the house. It will be rather dull music staying out here. Pa is away to-day but I'll find you some books and papers to pass the time with. I'll come in a little early. You appear like you had some education. Ever teach any?"

"Yes, two terms."

"I used to teach; nearly every winter for quite a long while, but my brothers are gone now and the chores and feeding the stock makes too much work for pa."

The house was inclosed by a white picket fence, within which was also a variety of shrubbery. Marshall went to a side entrance and took his guest to a sitting-room, wherein a coal fire was mouldering in the grate. The apartment contained an elderly lady whom the farmer introduced as his mother.

"Mr. Thornwood is going to stay with us to-night," announced Marsh. "Here, Mr. Thornwood, are some late papers you might look over when you find yourself alone. I'll lay out a few books, too, in case you run out of reading matter before I get in for the night. I have chores after supper. Now just make yourself at home. I'll be in from the field after a while."

Before excusing herself to prepare supper, Mrs. Holbert entertained the stranger, telling him of her cousin who had gone to the West many years before and who visited them at intervals. Only mother and son were present at the meal, and Thornwood then insisted on going out to assist Marsh in his

chores. These done, the trio gathered around the grate.

"You are some ways from home," observed Marshall.

"Yes, I feel that I am quite a piece off, and yet I have not come two hundred and fifty miles."

"Two hundred and fifty miles is almost as much as a thousand when it comes to getting into a train and going away from home," remarked Mrs. Holbert.

"Did you think of coming into our conutry to stay?" continued Marsh.

"That will depend on circumstances. I shall take a good look before I decide to go anywhere else."

"Have you a family," was the next question.

"No, I am one of those unfortunate persons called bachelors."

"Oho," laughed Marshall, "Perhaps you will find a better half down this way and then you will be more contented."

"How do you know but he has one already looked up?" suggested the mother.

"I didn't think so. Well, Mr. Thornwood, you and me can sympathize with one another. The old bachelors are the salt of the earth, and the old maids the pepper. I hope you may conclude to stay with us, although there is not much to come to. Still, I think there are better times ahead of us. There's a heap of coal about here and some day it will be wanted. We feel just a little out of the world now, but a railroad has been surveyed through this valley and some of these days it may come."

"Not very soon, I reckon," observed Mrs. Holbert.

The conversation drifted into the news of the day, their experiences in teaching, the ride from Tunnelton, the contrasts between the Buckeye State and West Virginia, and various other topics.

"Well," said Marshall at length, "the clock hands say it is half past nine, and as you have had a good deal crowded into this day, perhaps you feel like retiring. We get up early here and don't sit up very late."

"Just as soon now as any time," assented the guest.

"Marshall," said the mother, "I hope you don't mean to treat him like you did those girls."

The son laughed and then explained the circumstance to which allusion had been made.

"One day I was visiting where two young lady acquaintances live, and when I started for my room they were very careful to see that I went upstairs in the dark. When I put my foot on the first step of the stairway, it jerked a string and upset a bucket of walnuts at the head of the stairs. The bucket came bumping down and the nuts went over all creation. The girls reviled me for being careless. Well, in course of time they came here. As good luck would have it, there was a blacksnake in a box, and I was to send it the next day to an acquaintance in Cumberland. I took care to bring the box into the rear end of the hall and I let the girls know it was there. Then I slipped an iron rod into the bed they were to occupy. In due course of time I heard some screams that nearly raised the shingles on the roof. Their feet had come in contact with the cold rod. The girls rushed pell-mell into my sister's room and she called to me to remove my zoological specimen from

the guest chamber. I got ma to assure her that the real boa constrictor had been all the while in his proper place. Meanwhile, I went into the room and slipped the iron under my coat, but nothing would do but I must take his snakeship to the wash-house. The next day I lectured the young ladies on letting their imaginations scare them."

"You ought to be ashamed of such pranks," said the mother.

"Well," replied Marshall, "I studied the next Sunday school lesson somewhat closer than usual to make up for it. But I can tell of another prank in that line. There used to be an old bachelor in this country by the name of Bortney. That was in the days of the old log houses, and they wan't always tight enough to keep out the house snakes. This old fellow was mortal 'fraid of them. One time the boys peeled some cucumbers and put them into the foot of his bed. When his feet touched the cold, slimy things, he doubled up like a jack knife, then jumped out, got a light, and slammed away on the bed with the fire poker as if he was beating a carpet. When he found out the prank he gave the boys a Scotch blessing."

The host took a lamp and piloted the way to a spacious chamber. The floor was carpeted and the room was provided with a grate and also a washstand and its appurtenances. In one corner was a spinning wheel.

"That is a reminder of the olden time," remarked Marshall. "It hardly gets used any more, but some people in this county still use those things; and looms, too."

The host lingered a while for further chat and then bade his guest good night.

It was a soft bed the stranger got into. But on stretching out, his toes came in contact with the foot board, and he wondered why the coverings were not tucked in at that end. He had never known any such omission in the colder climate of the Western Reserve. But the stranger did not for some time go to sleep. The moon had risen, and her beams poured in through the window, making objects in the room very discernible. A moonlit room often made Thornwood wakeful. In this instance, the continued gazing helped to put his thoughts into a reminiscent mood.

James Thornwood was the older of two sons. He had never known for himself what it is to have a sister. His parents lived on a farm and their circumstances were fairly good. Their health was also good, and as they were only just within the border of middle age, it seemed probable that the father would continue to manage his own property for many years to come.

The younger son had developed the greater amount of energy and business capacity. He was the favored one in the eyes of both his parents. He had set up in the world for himself and was doing well.

The elder son had made several ventures in the way of earning a livelihood. But during the five years since he had reached his majority he seemed to gain no headway. Aside from his few personal belongings, he had not a hundred dollars to his name. His parents and brother were much inclined to disparage his efforts as well as his capabilities. He at length made up his mind that so long as he

was within reach of the cold water which was thrown so often and so plentifully upon his hopes and purposes, he could not expect to develop much self-reliance or achieve any reasonable degree of success.

This belief so wrought upon him that he determined to seek a new atmosphere. He was not at all ready to call himself a ne'er-do-well. He resolved to cut loose from home and friends and all early associations. He would go among utter strangers, trust to his own exertions, and keep his own counsel toward old associates as well as new ones.

In one very important respect, James Thornwood was highly favored. His character was above reproach. He was not only diligent and industrious, but he was entirely honest and trustworthy. He had now reached an age when personal traits have generally become fixed and when character is not easily overthrown.

"I shall stay till I have made some money," was his determination. "I shall look out for Number One. I'll not spend a cent foolishly. I'll work for my own interests. And I shall not again go so far as to pay attentions to any girl until I have a home of my own and am in some business that I can tie to. Until my business footing is squarely in shape, I shall not go home even for a visit, except for the most urgent possible reason."

Was Thornwood's resolution entirely faultless? Or would he some day come to look upon it in another light?

He put most of his private property into money, and the greater part of his little hoard he resolved to hold inviolate to the last possible moment. The

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sum he allowed himself for traveling expenses would not permit him to go very far.

But where was he to go? From time to time he had read of the latent resources of the Mountain State. And like many a homeseeker, he had been inclined to give too much heed to rose-colored representations. His interest was aroused and he made some inquiry.

While doing so, he chanced upon a letter in a religious paper, purporting to come from a civil engineer. It told of that mountainous belt of West Virginia which is penetrated by the Baltimore and Ohio railroad. The county to which he had now come was in the region so plainly pointed out.

This letter told him its inhabitants were the degenerate progeny of some early Scotch settlers who had wondered to these mountain solitudes as to a sort of No Man's Land. It told him these people lived in one-room log cabins, uniformly located at the bottom of deep hollows, and that they slept on husk beds. It told him they taxed themselves seven cents on the hundred dollars for school purposes and thirty cents for roads. It told him hospitality and neighborly aid were unknown virtues among these mountaineers; that the neighbor was charged ten cents for a meal and the stranger twenty-five cents; that in assisting a neighbor in any way, the charge therefor was as much as "the traffic would bear." It told him these people were sullen and revengeful, and that in their social gatherings, men, women, and children would fill themselves with moonshine whiskey flavored with Scotch snuff and other ingredients equally vile; and that knives and pistols were so freely used by both sexes and all ages that the

outcome of such a party was a list of casualties that would delight the surgeons of an emergency hospital.

A British essayist once declared he was ready to regret the horse was ever domesticated; so great has been the use made of this animal in enabling the strong to war against and oppress the weak. With equal justice he might have expressed a similar regret for the invention of printing; for with all its unquestioned benefits, printing multiplies many-fold the currency given to the writings inspired by malice and deliberate misrepresentation. Out of a mole-hill of truth, the writer in question had built up a mountain of slander.

Thornwood was inclined to shake his head while reading the letter, yet on considering the medium in which it appeared, he gave some weight to its assertions. They poisoned his mind and caused him to leave home with opinions which he found to be unjust. Yet so far from being influenced to go elsewhere, it is one of the contrarieties of human nature that he was the more resolved to see his Canaan for himself. So while he made up his mind to go to West Virginia, it was with a very foggy idea of what he would actually see.

It is true that while Ohio was the only home he had ever known, he himself and his mother also were natives of the very county to which he had now come. His father, a Pennsylvanian, had lived a brief while to the south of Mason and Dixon's line. It was here that he found a wife. But the young couple soon moved to Ohio, and their greater prosperity in the new home weaned them from the old. Memories of West Virginia came at length to be a rare topic of conversation in the family circle. The

parents, brothers, and sisters of Mrs. Thornwood had all disappeared from the Mountain State. At the time of the removal to Ohio, James was entirely too young to preserve the least recollection of his birthplace. He grew up a genuine Buckeye, and until he decided to leave home, the place of his nativity was of little interest in his eyes and aroused little curiosity.

But the matter now appeared in a different guise. It seemed to him a very proper thing that he should go to the region where he opened his eyes upon the world. His mother, it is true, could tell him little, except as to her home neighborhood. Yet she pronounced the newspaper letter a gross libel. And if the statements of the letter were not true as to the home of her girlhood, he did not believe they were true of the rest of the region referred to in the article. He was most unwilling to credit the thought that the county whence his maternal ancestors had come, was any such community as was pictured by the reckless writer.

No strong opposition was offered by the family and friends. They could see wisdom in his going West, but they could not see any sense in his returning to the semi-wilderness of the Alleghanies. But if James Thornwood were bent on having his way, and were goose enough to go there, then let him lie on the bed he would make. Such was their opinion, yet they did not mean to be unkind. James decided it would be well for him to go away, and the rest of the family acquiesced. That was all. He could return at any time it might please him to do so.

It had now been sixteen hours since he roused from his comfortless nap in the seat of a common passenger car. The train was then threading its

way alongside a stream as crooked as the road itself. Huge, conical knobs rose in every direction, and although usually free of timber, the traveler wondered how cultivation could be possible on their precipitous sides. The few villages he saw were begrimed with coal dust and coal smoke. As the train toiled up the heavy grade, the ground became more and more rugged. A row of coke ovens shot into view, their red throats glaring upward from amid a drifting cloud of smoke. Presently, the car lamps were lighted, and the train plunged into a tunnel, rumbling through the darkness for almost a mile.

Just beyond the exit he came to his immediate destination, the village of Tunnelton. Here, he was to await the departure of the train on the narrow-gage railway to Kingwood. He got off at a large building used for the combined purposes of store, warehouse, and station, and besmoked by the clouds from the almost ever-present locomotives. The waiting-room was a small, dingy place with a single window. Not finding it very interesting to remain here, he went into the apartment used as a company store and found it nearly half filled with loiterers, all spitting very industriously on the tobacco-saturated floor.

Quiting this room, he began to pace the dirty platform, so far as was permitted by the accumulation of bottle crates, chicken coops, laundry baskets, boxed machinery, and other classes of goods. There was a good number of loiterers on the platform. Some were eating peanuts and dropping the shells on the floor. Some were coal miners, with blackened faces and with lamps in their hats.

The village lay huddled along the course of a

damp swale. The dwellings were plain and cheaply built, and there was an absence of attractive exteriors and well-kept house yards.

"First impressions are not flattering," thought the newcomer. "But then I guess it is true that one never sees a country at its best until he gets away from its railroads."

A man with coarse clothes but a pleasant face was loading goods on a wagon.

"Going up to Kingwood or out in the country?" he inquired as Thornwood came near on one of his rounds.

"To Kingwood. But then I don't need to go there, perhaps. I am going to look at the country a little."

"Ever live on a farm?"

"All my life, almost."

"I didn't take you for a city fellow. Thought you acted as if you was going into the country. Well, I'm not going that-a-way quite—not to Kingwood, I mean,—but if you don't mind a five mile walk, you can ride with me as far as I go, and you'll save half a dollar. And then you'll see more of the country than you will on the train. I have some load, but that don't cut no ice. Your weight won't be enough to break us down."

Thornwood was more than willing to go with the man. He would not only save a portion of his scanty funds, but he would have a traveling acquaintance from whom he could doubtless learn something of advantage. Yet the time came when he never thought of this ride without a sense of annoyance that he failed to make better use of his opportunity. But then people can look behind much better than they can look ahead.

A twinge of homesickness had begun to develop before he left the train, and he was in its clutches while he paced the platform. During the wagon ride the malady was arrested. Yet this result was due to his cheery companion rather than to the prospect around him.

The sinuous road was constantly winding through a maze of rugged hills, whose slopes where cleared bristled with rocks or stumps or with both. The thin, light character of the soil was very manifest to the eye. The farmhouses rarely looked any better than the dwelling where he afterward took dinner. He very nearly registered a vow that his tarry in this region would be exceedingly brief. Yet the driver told him the road followed a ridge, and that the view was more unpromising than in the case of some other portions of the county.

The kindly attentions he had had during this first day had thrown his thoughts into a complete tangle.

At first he believed Buskirk and Dodrill to be cold and unsympathetic; yet they had risen markedly in his esteem. He had already begun to see that they had been undemonstrative; that they had taken their time and their own way to form an estimate of him, and that he had passed a satisfactory test in their opinion. And as for Marsh Holbert and his mother, they appeared like old acquaintances from the start.

With the prim and precise people among whom Thornwood had grown up, it was an almost unthinkable proceeding to take a stranger into one's house without indorsement from a trustworthy source, or at all events without some inquiry into his character and antecedents. The stranger might be immoral; he might be a thief; he might not have had a bath

since the last thunder-shower overtook him; his clothes might be infested with fleas or bedbugs. The proper thing for him to do was to look up some public house; and the public house was bound to take him in. If his purse were empty, he might indeed be given shelter, but this alternative appeared in the light of an unwelcome duty. Their way of looking at the question was logical, and in their eyes it was just.

The young man had come from the smooth, well-tilled acres of northern Ohio with their comfortable, well ordered farmhouses. Here he found rocky, stumpy fields, scattered among belts of woodland as though from the mouth of some gigantic pepper-box. The fields seemed without shape, and the hilly, stony roads seemed to wind through the country with little evidence of system. The farmhouses suffered by contrasting them with those he had known.

But there was another phase to the picture. Thornwood had not seen a dude and he had seen some very hard-looking clothes; yet there had been constant evidence of a friendly spirit. He already saw glimpses of a something for which he had longed, but of which he thought he had seen too little in his past experience. This something the newcomer could not yet define, but it seemed like a manifestation of brotherhood. It possessed the power to bring him to a favorable decision.

He was a stranger among strangers, and had nothing to speak in his behalf unless it were his face. He was poor; he had as yet no assurance of finding anything to do; and he saw no ground for suspecting interested motives on the part of the people he met. Notwithstanding all this, they were asking him to

their homes without a showing of hesitation and without seemingly a thought as to character, cleanliness of skin, or the pestiferous insects that might haunt his clothes. Furthermore, they appeared to extend their courtesies as a matter of course.

"I shall stay right here and fight my battle out where I am," was Thornwood's determination.

The muffled tones of the clock in the sitting-room proclaimed the hour of twelve before the stranger composed himself to sleep.

## III

### Uneventful Yet Important in Its Way

When we cannot act as we wish we must
act as we can.—*Terrence.*

After Thornwood was awake, but before he was out of bed, Marsh Holbert came softly into the room, carrying a tin pail filled with warm water.

"Good morning," said the guest.

"Good morning, sir. I hope you rested well and had no bad dreams or any trouble with cold irons. I have brought you some water to wash with. You can come down whenever you are ready. I thought you might need a good rest and I didn't call you."

While they were drawing back from the breakfast table, Marshall remarked to his guest: "I'll have to go plowing now, but you can just make yourself comfortable in the sitting-room."

"I thank you very much," replied Thornwood. "But I have some distance to go, and I feel that I must be on my way."

"Just suit yourself about your time for starting off. Well, if you must go, good by and good luck to you. If you are ever round this way again, come and see us."

The newcomer promised compliance, and Marshall pointed out a short cut to the Morgantown pike. For more than two miles his course was through the low basin, or glade, which he had viewed from his point of observation the day before.

"This looks very different from what I saw yester-

day," thought the wayfarer. "The soil is black and not so very stony. This county is not one and the same thing all over, that is evident."

The sluggish streams coursing through the glade had spongy banks, and there were ditches to reduce the marshiness of the low-lying fields. In these moister spots were thickets of alder bushes, and along the roadway was an occasional crab-apple shrub or hazel bush. In the pastures and meadows was already a considerable growth of grass. The broad stumps dotting portions of the higher ground bore witness to the strength of the soil, and there was additional evidence in the better class of farm-houses occurring here.

Near a crossroads he came upon a man loitering by a shed containing wagon scales.

"Do you know Sam Henson, down on Three Fork?" inquired the man after salutations had been exchanged.

"No, I have no acquaintance with him," replied Thornwood, who had decided not to advertise his ignorance of the mountain country.

"Hearn tell of that slick steal down there, didn't y'?"

"No, I must have missed hearing it some way. What was it?"

"Why, it was the doggondest thing I ever knowed. You see, a fellow named Booz was working for Henson. He never had no good name round that country, though he worked for Henson all straight enough. Well, Henson, he had went away on some cattle business, and Booz was left to luk after things. He tuk a yoke of oxen belonging to Henson and druv 'em in the night down acrost the

railroad into Reno district. He went to a man named Siler and tried him on a trade, but they couldn't come together on the price. Then he went on and struck Isril Barnhouse, and sold him the hull shooting match for eighty dollars cash. Well, this Booz, he lay round there on the sly, and tuk notice where the oxen was put in for the night and where the yoke laid. In the night, Booz, he tuk out the cattle, yoked 'em up, and druv 'em clean back to the pasture where he tuk 'em from. Henson never missed 'em. Then Barnhouse, he went to hunt up the oxen, and finely got round to where they was. He come into Henson's yard and see the oxen and was going to start off with 'em. Henson, he come out and asked what in thunder he was doing. Barnhouse said they was his oxen that he had lost. Henson said they was his'n, and danged if any man would drive 'em off. Barnhouse said no, they was his'n and he knowed it, and danged if he didn't have his property. They both got right smart warm, and they was getting into a racket over the oxen, but Henson, he asked who he got 'em of, and when, and all about it. They talked around a little bit and then they seed what was the trouble. If Booz had 'a ben sharp, he'd 'a skipped. But he stayed right there and they got 'im in the lockup now. Reckon he'll get sent up to the pen. Barnhouse, he got right smart chawed up over that thing."

"What kind of tree is this?" inquired Thornwood after commenting on the story of the theft.

He pointed to a small tree covered with white bloom.

"Why, that's a sarviss tree. If you's along here in a few weeks you'll find it full of red berries—if no

frost don't kill 'em. Mighty fine eating, sarvisses is. Don't have any up in your country, I reckon, though I dont know where that is."

After the two men had ascertained each other's name and a few more particulars, Thornwood's new acquaintance went to expatiating upon the glades.

"This glade country's the best land we have. See them meadows on yon side the creek with a few stacks of old hay here'n there, and pens built round 'em to keep the cattle out? I farmed that land one year and made eight hundred dollars clean money out'n the place. I had fifty stacks of hay. Scandalous hard work to clear glade land and get the brush and filth out of it, but it brings the grass. And when it's all shaped up, you have a good farm. I've knowed this glade ground to sell as high as fifty dollars an acre. Frosty, though. Frost most always strikes here afore it does on the high ground. And foggy, too, Ground's wet, you see. Once in a while, though, the fog will keep off a frost. Great place for dew. So you're going toward Morgantown? Road wagon gone up ten minutes ago. If you'd 'a ben along then you might 'a got a lift. May strike a ride yet. Well, I must go look up some yoes o' mine."

There was a very perceptible ascent in the highway and when it had gained the level, sandy summit of the wooded ridge, the newcomer had a final glimpse of the valley he had crossed and the ridge he had traversed the day before. The morning grew hot, and near a lonely log house on the farther slope, the traveler discerned a spring issuing from a mass of rocks. The tin cup which lay handy by was leaky, as well as rusty, and it possessed a side deliv-

ery nearly equal to the speed with which it could be drained from the top.

The scenery became rugged. Huge masses of rock reared their precipitous sides above the roadway. Yawning ravines opened out from the mountain side and grew broader with their descent. Small log houses appeared on the ribbon-like bottoms, each with a leanto at the rear. Well-worn footpaths extended from one house to another through the patches of sumac.

At the mouth of a by-road the newcomer fell in with a load of newly sawed lumber drawn by a mule team. The young man who was crouching like a toad on the front end of the pile wore tan-colored blouse and overalls and an old straw hat. His beard was rudimentary and on his lips was a dark, slimy deposit. In one corner of his mouth was a dirty stick, and a small tin can protruded from his overalls pocket.

"Goin' up to the bark peelin' ?" echoed the fellow in response to the stranger's question. "Whacker's the man you want t' see. He's the boss. You'll find 'im up 'bout the mill. Keep the straight road down this yer lane fer a mile."

Following the directions given, Thornwood descended into the valley of a small stream. He heard the snarling of a saw long before he came to the portable sawmill. Two more wagons were being loaded from the piles of lumber lying about.

"That's Whacker," said a man on a lumber pile, pointing to a man of middle age some distance away.

The questioner was hardly out of earshot when the respondent put this query to the man he was working with: "What you reckon that feller's come

out here fer? Can't be a wantin' t' peel bark, can 'e? Diked out a leetle too fine."

"Some lumber agent, I reckon," was the indifferent response. "But say, why don't them fellers up the mill trim their saw a leetle better? Heap o' bad sawin' in this yer pile."

The checkered blouse of Mr. Whacker was partly unbuttoned, revealing a shirt front deeply soiled by the tobacco juice drooling down his chin and throat.

"Reckon I got all the men I can use," replied the superintendent, as he proceeded to carve out a chunk of liberal size from a piece of plug tobacco, so that his salivary glands might not lack for exercise.

"Might see Linn," he presently added, moving away.

"Doesn't seem to care a cent whether I have work or not," thought the newcomer. "I've have to ask this boy where Linn is."

"That's him coming down the road way up yonder," replied a ten year old, barefoot boy, who paused to stare at his questioner and to look back at him after he had passed. Mr. Linn was a man in the thirties and he walked with a slouching gait. He wore a threadbare suit, and a soft hat which lopped down like an umbrella.

Thornwood renewed his request for employment.

"Whacker was the man to find you a place," declared Linn. "Well, if he won't give you work, I will. My gang is not quite full yet. They're a mile and a half up toward the mountain. After a few days they'll shanty it down here. I'm putting up a shanty now, up here a little piece. That'll be cheaper'n board'n 'em out. Had any 'sperience in bark peelin'?"

"No, but I've worked about a saw mill a little."

"You'll soon catch on. Well, I'll send you up to the widder Barley's to board. That's near where the men's at work. You c'n stay there till I put the shanty up. She charges forty cents a day. I pay my men a dollar. It's so nigh noon you better go on up. You'll go right by where the men's at work, and they can put you on up to the widder Barley's. Tell them folks I sent you there. I'll be up in the woods agen two o'clock."

Linn gave minute directions for finding the way to his men, but the stranger almost despaired of being able to follow out the instructions. He spent the greater portion of an hour in plunging up and down rocky hillsides, grown up to brush and briars, or encumbered with fallen, rotting logs, intermingled with the boughs and tops of trees that had been felled.

He had indeed paused to ask the way of a fat woman who appeared at the door of a solitary cabin.

"Right on up over yon knob," was the answer. "I don't just know the way. I ain't ben there nary time. But you can't miss it much."

The sound of axes was a better guide than these foggy directions. The seeker for work presently came to a group of ten men, some of whom were sawing or chopping, while others were prying off the bark from the fallen logs. With one accord they began staring at the stranger. The face of the nearest one speedily assumed a leer, which did not wear off so long as Thornwood was in sight. The conversation of the men was largely made up of profane expressions, few in variety but liberal in quantity.

"This yer ain't Linn's crowd," said the foreman, a

big, muscular man. "They're furder down this yer dreen. Hear them axes that-a-way? Want to go to widder Barley's? She lives up yon way 'bout half a mile. You c'n go through these woods. You don't have to round to where Linn's men is."

"It's mighty nigh onto noon now," spoke up another man, whose hair and features betrayed a small admixture of African blood. "He c'n git 'is dinner a sight quicker by goin' t' Ramp's. Then he c'n come back through here and save that long elbow."

The foreman regarded the speaker for a moment in silence.

"Yes," said he, turning to Thornwood, "that's the way for y' to do. Don't reckon you c'n git in up at Barley's, noway. Just keep up the bed of this yer dreen till you come into a field and then you'll see the house right nigh these yer woods. Can't miss it. It's no ways at all from here. You c'n git there 'fore you're quarter way up to Barley's."

Thornwood turned in the direction indicated, and as soon as he was out of hearing, the young man with the leer made this observation to the foreman: "Y' kep' yer face straight, didn' y', now?"

"Good one on 'im," replied the foreman with a grin.

"H'yah, h'yah," laughed the frizzly-haired man, who, however, was not alone in the fact of having a mixed ancestry.

"Feller didn't cuss any," remarked another workman. "Can't take a new hand in this crowd that don't swear."

In the meantime the stranger had gained the field and found himself within a minute's walk of an unpainted frame house. The evidences of filth and

squalor multiplied with every step he took toward the dwelling. Half of the window lights were missing and the gaps had been filled in with dirty rags. A glance through an open door showed that the interior was no cleaner than a pigsty, while the stench that floated out would have done credit to a Chinese city. Near the end of a porch was a half-naked child, its face incrusted with a war paint of patches of grime. On the floor of the porch lay a well-grown hog, grunting with satisfaction at the petting it received from another child. Passing around in this direction, Thornwood saw a woman and a girl, both with disheveled locks, bare feet, and very careless attire. The woman was turning off the water from a pot of potatoes. Several of the potatoes rolled out on the ground, and were replaced in the pot after being wiped on the skirt of her dress. An assistant housekeeper in the person of a long-nosed dog, was lapping out a frying-pan and doing his work with great thoroughness. The mouths of both the females were discolored with snuff.

The feelings of Thornwood were those of disgust and indignation. He wondered whether he had simply been victimized or whether the Ramp and Barley domiciles would prove to be peas from the same pod. He stayed only long enough to ask the way to the Barley home, and passing by a stable and a corn-crib that were almost ruinous enough to fall down, he came into a wagon track that soon brought him to the other house.

The low, small dwelling of Mrs. Barley stood in the midst of some rocky fields. The newcomer's approach was heralded by a yelping cur and a young man walked out to the gate.

"Come back here, Tige," shouted the youth, emphasizing his demand with a pebble that took effect on the dog's head and sent him kiyiing under the fence.

"How do you do, sir? Won't you come in?" asked the youth.

"Mr. Linn sent me here to board while I work for him," explained Thornwood.

"That's all right, I reckon. Come in on the porch and sit down. Take this cheer."

So far as the stranger could see, the house rather suffered in comparison with Buskirk's, yet it was vastly more inviting than the one he had left. A tall, light-haired girl of about seventeen years came out on the porch to survey the newcomer, and when his back was partially turned she threw a kiss at him and returned to the kitchen. Her brother also went into the house, but presently reappeared with a pitcher of milk and a glass. While the latter was being filled, the stranger observed an arsenal upon the girders under the porch roof. It was composed of two rifles and two shot guns of old patterns.

"Reckon we goin' t' have several cherries'n peaches this yer," remarked the youth. "Powerful sight o' bloom. Want in?"

The last words were addressed to a cat mewing at the door.

Dinner was soon announced, and the stranger was conducted through a very plainly furnished sitting-room into the kitchen. In this apartment the stone-built chimney contained a fire-place much more than large enough to take in the cook-stove, which was warped and cracked, and wired together in a score of

places. Mrs. Barley, a tall, angular woman, was putting the last dish on the table.

"We ain't got nothing but heavy bread to-day," she remarked. "I didn't have no time to bake no light bread. Take some o' these beans. I dried a heap last yer. They're a right yieldy sort. Here's meat'n p'taters. Just rech and help yerself."

After the meal the widow's son pointed the way across the fields to where Linn's men were employed. Linn himself had not yet arrived, and the novice was set to peeling a log. The work being new, he did not make good time and was not at all sorry when the head man made his appearance.

"Where's yer spud, Bill," he asked of one of his men. "I want to show this feller how to strip off the bark."

During the rest of the day Linn was Thornwood's companion.

"That was a doggoned low down trick sending you to Ramp's," he declared. "Just like them fellers. I have a right civil crowd here. Them Ramps is redbrush people and they live like hogs—and you don't want nothing to do with 'em nohow. Well, set down on this yer log awhile. No use to work too hard at the beginning."

The foreman opened a tin can, put the point of his jackknife into the contents, and daubed the powder over his lips.

"Use snuff?" he inquired making a motion with the can in Thornwood's direction.

"No, sir."

The newcomer put emphasis into his reply and made a face.

"All these fellers do," remarked Linn. "And I

don't think it's good for a person. But now you look as though you might do some better kind o' work than peelin' bark."

"I wanted to fill in a little time and look around."

"That's all right enough," affirmed Linn. "Healthy work up here in the mountain. Find things all right up to the widder's?"

"I can get along very well there, I think?"

"You'll find her and her boys right clever people."

At the close of the afternoon, Linn examined the fingers of his new employee.

"Raised some blisters," he remarked. "Hands a little soft. Reckon you ain't ben doin' rough work lately. You better go set up bark in the morning. I generly have boys do that part o' the work, but they're such a triflin' lot that you take too much o' yer time watching 'em. A feller can't be every place at once. In settin' up bark there's a heap o' stooping to do, but it will be lighter on y'. I see you've got the sand."

"Good evening, man," said an elder son of the widow as he entered the sitting-room shortly after Thornwood's return from the woods. "How does the bark peel to-day?"

"It was new work to me, but I heard the man say it peels very well."

"I sort o' thought it would. The bark generly slips right well this kind o' weather. You must look out for yerself a little. Some men gets bad hurts by trees fallin' on 'em. I'm thirty yer old and I've ben about the woods ever sence I was big enough to handle a axe. I ben staved up a powerful sight myself."

Thornwood's sleeping apartment was a very low

room, hardly more than large enough to contain the bedstead with its husk mattress.

At sunset and again at sunrise, the newcomer's attention was drawn to the far-reaching view from the house. Since the dwelling lay on the outer flank of the westernmost range of the Appalachian system, it commanded a wide prospect over the hill region of the Mountain State. Cone-shaped knobs, sometimes terminating in a well defined apex, were scattered amid a labyrinth of many-formed hillsides, the whole being massed together in wild confusion. The western horizon, when thrown in plain relief against the sky, was rendered jagged like the edge of a saw by these uneven and almost countless projections, many of them being tufted with groves. Having once been as far west as Iowa, Thornwood had seen the prairie land for himself. But while the present view was that of an expansive plain, its rugged contour was very unlike the easy, graceful undulations of a Western landscape with its smooth horizon.

Next morning the stranger began the work of placing the pieces of bark against the stripped logs. He took his dinner with him and joined the other men as they sat near a spring to empty their pails.

"I can cook a chicken better'n this," remarked one of the men. "Done it afore now when I ben shantyin'. You jus' dress a chicken, then plaster it all over with mud, and put it in a bed of hot coals, an' keep it there some time. When you come to knock off the mud, the feathers'll come off with it and the chicken will be cooked nice as you please."

"We ought to have some whiskey up here," said another man. "Bill, it's your turn to fetch out a bottle from town. I can tell by the looks of a fellow

when he likes a good drink o' whiskey."

And the speaker glanced rather doubtfully at Thornwood.

At the conclusion of the meal the snuff-boxes were produced and the men returned to their work.

Thornwood grew weary of the frequent stooping and he did not regret the approach of a shower. The men threw their tools under the logs and bark heaps, and hurried down a ravine.

"Come on," they shouted to the newcomer. "We're going to the cave."

The cavern to which they went penetrated an immense ledge and afforded complete security from the rain.

"Too late to work any more to-day," said Linn when the shower abated. "And the bark is too wet. We'll knock off till morning."

Thornwood was not asked to remove to the shanty. On the contrary, the foreman advised him to remain where he was. Linn perceived that the newcomer was used to better quarters than he was now thrown upon, and he did not wish to subject him to the further discomforts of the crowded shanty. In fact, he had taken an interest in the new employee, and this was why he assigned to him the lighter portion of the work.

By talking with the workmen and the members of the Barley family, Thornwood gained a better insight into the peculiarities of his chosen home. He resolved, however, that he would return to the glades as soon as he had finished his work in the woods.

The morning of the first Sunday found him quite tired, and although Morgantown, the seat of the state university, was but two hours walk distant, and

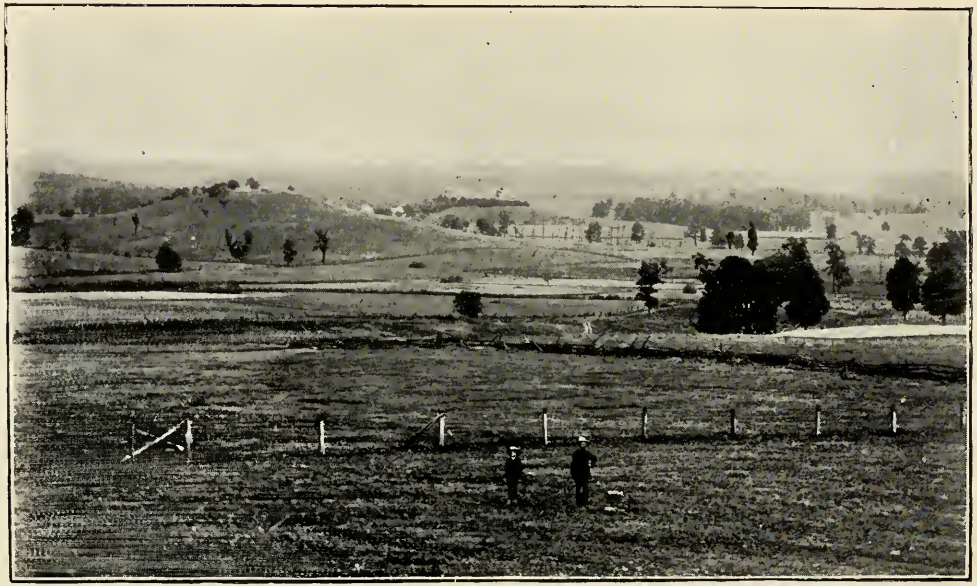
its direction plainly indicated at night by the glare of its street lights, Thornwood preferred to spend the day in rest. But the widow and most of her family attended a funeral some miles away.

"It were an old man," she reported. "He was knowed all over this yer kentry and people come from fur and nigh. It were a powerful buryin.'"

After allowing for Sundays and bad weather, the newcomer had less than seven dollars to represent in a substantial way the net avails of his toil in the woods. Yet he did not consider the time lost. Nor was it. The indirect reward accruing from time that is meagerly paid may prove in the end of greater value than the reward that is measured by the yard-stick of dollars and cents.

"Thornwood," said Linn as he handed the newcomer his pay; "I see you take a notion to them glades and I don't blame y'. It's a good country over there; nice, civil people. Now I have something to say I think will please y'. There's a farmer over there named Hozy Neil wants a man till about August. That'll be three months. He's well fixed and won't work y' hard, and ye'll have a right good place. Ye'll make more'n y' can in such work as this yer, becaze rainy days won't count. And there's another thing. Ye'll have a heap better chance to look you up a school. If Neil takes any sort o' notion to y', you might keep on workin' for 'im or some man else till it comes time for school to open up. I hearn about this not an hour ago. I met a man where I turn off the pike who said he knowed y'. Dodrill's his name. He belongs over about the glades. He spoke to Neil about y'. I'll give y' some directions and tell y' of a nigh cut over to the

glades, and if y' start right now, you've plenty time to slip over there. I'm well pleased with y', and I'm powerful glad t' put y' on t' something better'n this. You've made a name round here for sett'n up bark in good shape."



A PROSPECT IN THE GLADES Phot'd by C. S. Rexroad

## IV

### Again in the Glades

> What a man can do is his greatest ornament.—*Carlyle.*

In less than two hours Thornwood was beyond the summit of Chestnut Ridge, the broad-topped, forest-clad elevation which separates the counties of Preston and Monongalia. The forest trees were nearly in full leaf, and not until after he had gained the border of an open field was the wayfarer rewarded with a view of the glades. Looking down on the basin from an altitude of three hundred feet, it appeared narrow. The low knobs rising from its bosom could readily be distinguished from one another, but as the distance and the elevation increased, the prominences merged into long, billowy undulations, stretching on either hand as far as the eye could reach. In the far east were some blue hills, closely following the artificial line that divides Maryland from West Virginia. The vesture of green had softened the outlines of the landscape and rendered the prospect more pleasing to the stranger than it was at first.

As he looked toward where Buskirk and Holbert lived, and sought out the more familiar landmarks, it seemed to him as though he were coming home. The clear air and the warm sunshine had something to do with this feeling but not everything. Had he pondered on the matter without allowing sentiment to enter into the account, he could not for the life of

him have told why he should have an attachment for the county on the east side of the height and almost a prejudice against the county on the western slope. He simply followed his impressions and did not attempt to weigh them or account for them.

But as no two human beings are alike in their mental traits, neither are any two places alike in their power to please the individual person. The same man will be winsome toward one of his fellows, yet antagonistic toward another.

So every spot, whether it be urban or rural, whether it be village or farm, has its own individuality. The first view is either attractive or repellant. A pleasing effect may sometimes defy either reason or analysis to explain. It may come with quite the force of an intuition. This often explains why the choice of a new home may not commend itself to the friend whose better judgment is at once conceded. It is not possible for both the homeseeker and the friend to regard the matter from precisely the same standpoint.

Heavy and persistent rains had very lately fallen, yet the road was quite dry. Mud soon disappears from the mountain road, owing to the absorbent nature of the soil, the rarefied atmosphere, and the stiff breeze that often follows a rain. Yet temporary springs of clear water were issuing from little holes in the road banks and running in strong rills down the wheel ruts.

The woods were whitened with the large flowers of the dogwood tree, and near the ground was an abundance of honeysuckle bloom. Thornwood often paused a moment to collect a handful of the red, tender leaves of the wintergreen. Though this herb

goes by various names, and is usually called "mountain tea" in the Allegheny highlands, it is just as fragrant and fiery under one name as under another.

Soon after gaining the crest of the mountain ridge, he turned out of the road to look at a cave, which he had been told of by Linn and which lay screened by the forest. In a steep sandstone cliff was an elliptical opening full a hundred feet broad and about twenty in height. The cave floor within was flat and it was strewn with small rocks. Although the cave was deep, it steadily contracted in width and height, but when the explorer had gone forward until he had to stoop, he could see an expansion in the cave a little distance before him. On the roof of the main apartment were dozens of names printed with chalk, but sometimes obscured by soot. On the rocky ledge outside, affording a descent to the entrance, were many other names carved in the rock. Other evidence that the cave was a resort of picnic parties was seen in the wagon tracks in the open space above the cliff and the patch of timothy which had here taken possession of the ground.

After descending into the glades, Thornwood came upon a small drove of cattle, whose bloody heads, sometimes dripping gore upon the ground, told that the dehorning knife had done its work. He then met an elderly woman coming into the highway from another road. She was riding horseback and was managing a parcel with each hand in addition to guiding her steed.

"May I take one of those bundles?" he inquired. "I walk about as fast as you are going."

"Don't keer ef y' do," was the reply. "You're young and soople. Hit's not fur to Gladetown now."

The village contained at least fifteen frame buildings, mainly huddled together on one road. The day was not one of those which merchants find favorable to trade, yet two men appeared at the door of the nearest grocery. They looked curiously at the man afoot, and did not fail to ask the woman if she knew who he was.

But the stranger did not stop. The day was waning and the home of Mr. Neil lay beyond the village. He found the commodious farmhouse inclosed by the customary picket fence. Flowering shrubs occupied a portion of the well-grassed lawn, while tubs and pots containing cacti, geraniums and other house plants, were sitting on the front porch. A grape arbor extended from the house to the garden. On many of the pickets near the kitchen were inverted fruit jars, set out for a prolonged sun bath. Not far from the kitchen door was a springhouse of stone, built into the foot of a bank. A little farther away was a brass wash-kettle, suspended from a pair of crotched props and underneath the utensil were the embers of a wood fire. A woman was taking from a clothes-line such articles as were dry.

The newcomer went toward the wash-kettle and accosted the woman.

"This is Mrs. Neil, I presume?"

"Yes, sir. Won't you come in the house?" she replied, looking out with a smile from the depths of her sunbonnet.

The stranger wondered whether this invitation could be anything more than an expression of courtesy. He did not think of being asked to the house before his name and business had become known.

"Thanks, but I am looking for Mr. Neil."

"You will find him in the big stable on yon side of that wagon house."

Going in the indicated direction and pushing open the stable door, the stranger found within a gray-bearded man, shearing a sheep.

Thornwood had been used to hearing business matters dealt with in a direct, matter-of-fact way; but he now thought it might be the better policy not to plunge at once into the errand upon which he had come. Mr. Neil might desire some opportunity for taking a measure of the caller. So the would-be applicant just announced his name and prior residence.

"I've been in your state," observed Mr. Neil. "I have a cousin who moved there and bought a farm. Never here before, were you?"

"Not until two weeks or so ago, so far as I know personally."

"So far as you know personally?" repeated the farmer in an inquiring tone.

"I'm a native of this county," explained Thornwood. "But when my folks went to Ohio I was less than a year old, and so I don't remember about it. They moved up near Cleveland."

"What part of the county did they live in?"

"They were four miles north of Bruceton."

"That is over in Grant district. I am very little acquainted there. How did your people come to get among the Yankees up in the Western Reserve?"

"My grandfather Thornwood was a native of Connecticut. He moved to Pennsylvania in early life and married there. Two of his brothers settled in Ohio, and it was a part of one of their farms that

father bought. My mother is a native of this county."

"So, naturally enough, this country is entirely new to you, and you grew up as one of the people you've lived among."

"Yes, my parents became quite fully naturalized to Ohio. But of late I have had a strong desire to see what my native county looks like."

"Well," replied the farmer, "it is not the worst place in the world, and perhaps not the best. It is a rougher country than Ohio. It is not so easy to farm these hill lands, and so we give a good deal of attention to stock. I keep quite a little flock of cattle and some sheep. We have to raise corn, oats, and hay for our stock, but we don't send much grain to market except buckwheat. Most every farmer raises from one hundred to six hundred bushels of that. It has a reputation away from home, and they call this the Buckwheat County. Well, where have you been putting in the time since you came to our country?"

"I wanted a little time to look about, and so I went to setting up tan-bark for a man named Linn."

"Over in Mongerhale?"

"Yes, on the Hawes tract."

"Was it Levi Linn, a young-like fellow?"

"Yes, sir."

"I know him, and I know just where you were. Hear any swearing and vulgarity?"

"A great deal."

"Yes," affirmed Neil, "one will hear scuds of it among those men. You'll find it very different over here in this corner. You'll hardly ever see a drunken man, either."

Here was a chance to drive home a wedge, and

Thornwood proceeded to do so.

"What if I were to stay here in the county?" he suggested.

"No law agen that. We could find room for you. The fact is, a great many of our people have moved out, and that keeps the country from filling up. Some have gone into the towns or where there's public works. Some have gone West. Most of us have friends out in those states. There's not enough demand for labor to keep all our people at home or induce many outside folks to come in. Still, we'd be glad to have more good people with us. Hardly as many folks over here in the village as there used to be. When a family moves away, it seems to leave a gap that don't always get filled at once. It's not that way in a big town. People are always moving into them sort of places. Lived on a farm, you say?"

"Yes, all my life except for a few months. I know something of sawmill work and can do a little carpentering."

"All that comes handy in this country. Ever teach or clerk, or strike any other soft job?"

"Yes, I've done both, but farming is rather my choice."

"How do you vote?"

Under ordinary circumstances this question would have been a poser. But Linn had told him the voters about Gladetown were distressingly unanimous.

"I vote the same way you do, I expect."

A pleased look crept over Mr. Neil's face, and the wrinkles at the corner of his eye drew nearer together.

"I was brought up a democrat," continued Thorn-

wood. "My brother is one yet. But I think for myself and I voted on your side at the last election. Still, I wouldn't promise to vote a straight ticket every time, and I don't think a democratic success need ruin the country."

"So you are not very strenuous either way."

"I believe in a man's voting some ticket, but I don't believe in his voting any ticket blindly, and not looking to see what men are on it. There are times when I think one ought to change. I'm a good deal of an independent myself. I look at the candidate more than the platform."

"Well," replied Neil, "I believe in keeping a proper amount of independence, although I'm a stiff party man myself. Perhaps you and your brother took opposite sides from being contrary minded."

"There may be a little something in that."

"Belong to any church?"

"Yes, the Presbyterian."

"There's one of that kind only a little way from here. I think you better stay with us; a while, anyhow, and then you may want to stay longer. Our people here will make you welcome."

Here was the coveted chance to drive wedge number two.

"Can you make use of a hand like me?"

"Might do such a thing. I did have a boy, but he's just gone and won't be back before August. Smoke?"

"No, sir, I don't use tobacco in any form."

"Then you never burned up a barn by using a pipe. I don't use the weed either. But do you think you could make enough here to pay your whiskey bills?"

"I don't drink."

"Look out there, now, I might have to think you are too good."

"I have failings enough without piling those habits on top of them."

"I felt right sure you's not a drinking man, or I wouldn't put that question to you. I'll take you in out of the wet, I think. What wages do you want?"

"Only what is customary here. Perhaps you would like for me to work on trial a few days."

"Well, we won't fall out on that. Are you married or single?"

"Single, I expect."

"What," commented Mr. Neil, throwing an amused look in his direction. "Well, we have a few girls in this country waiting to be picked up. But then some Buckeye girl may have a claim on you, and in that case it might be hard work to hold you here. Perhaps she jilted you and that's why you come away."

Thornwood's face colored slightly, though not from displeasure. But Mr. Neil was busy with his shears just then and did not detect the look.

The men were still talking, when a farm-bell mounted on a post near the kitchen door began to clang.

"That means supper," remarked the farmer rising to his feet.

"What do you do with this?" asked Thornwood, as they went by a strongly built sled with wooden runners. "It looks as though it had been used lately."

"It has," replied the farmer, with a smile. "Reckon you don't use such things in your country when there's no snow on the ground?"

"No, indeed."

"That's a farm sled. We make considerable use of them here. They pull a little hard sometimes, but we can take up hay with them on some of our steep hills where we can't get in with a wagon."

Unlike Buskirk, Neil introduced his wife to the new farm hand. No other person was visible within doors.

At the close of the next day Neil made this remark to Thornwood: "I'm suited with you from all I can see, and we might as well make a bargain. How does fifteen a month strike you?"

"All right."

"Then we'll call the matter settled."

"In the morning," said Thornwood, "I'll go over to the village and send for my trunk. I left it at Tunnelton until I found out where I was going to be."

"As for a school," observed Neil, "I think they were all spoke for round here when the winter terms closed. But there's some show for you to get in right here at Gladetown. The school had been promised, but I was told this evening that the fellow has withdrew his application. You might get a promise of the school, but they can't close up a contract until after institute and examination. Before a fellow can teach, he must take out a certificate in the county he's going to teach in, and attend institute. That don't come off till August. We have three trustees to every school, and one goes out each year. The school year begins with July. So it is most important for you to get at the two who don't go out. They are John Wirt and Simon Baldwin. Them two both live some piece out. Grant Harley is the third man, and he's in the village. He's the postmaster. You

may have your time to-morrow and look them people up."

The postoffice was kept in one of the two village stores. The only person in the room was a young man stamping letters. A buckboard, the conveyance of the mail carrier, was near the door.

"Stopping out at Mr. Neil's, aren't you?" inquired the clerk.

"Yes," was the sole reply.

"People have been wondering what you were," continued the clerk. "You know that's their way. Some thought you's a teacher, maybe. Ross is my name ; Tom Ross."

"And mine is James Thornwood. Guess we are likely to become better acquainted. I'm to stay out there a few months."

"Glad to hear it. There'll be that much more company in the place."

A man entered just then whom the newcomer recognized as Abner Dodrill. The latter extended his hand with a smile of recognition.

"Glad to see you again. I hear you've come back to our country. Going to work for Hozy Neil?"

"Yes, we made a bargain and I thank you very much for sending me there. I think I shall have a pleasant home."

"Yes," said Dodrill assuringly, "you'll come on all right. Good place to stay. Hozy is a right stiff man."

"What do you mean by that?"

"I mean he's well fixed financially. But say, which way you bound just now?"

"To Mr. Wirt's."

"John Wirt's?"

"Yes."

"Then come go along with me. It's right on my road. I'm going over to Kingwood again. I was there yesterday and don't like to have to knock off from work and go again to-day. I've got no load."

"Mail ready, Tom?" asked the man with the buck-board.

"Yes, there it is. All you are good for is to bring the mail."

"And not much good even then," added the carrier.

Tom Ross slung the mail pouch over the counter and hastened to the rear of the room to wait on a woman who had just then entered with a basket on her arm, a colored cloth concealing the contents from view. The barefoot boy who followed her was holding a Plymouth Rock hen by the legs.

Dodrill was ready to start and the two men got into his conveyance. Thornwood's experience with tan-bark was the subject of discussion as they approached a house from which a young woman with her sleeves rolled up to her elbows came running out to the road. In one hand she carried a letter and under the thumb that held it down were two one cent coins.

"How do you do, pretty?" was Abner's salutation.

"None o' your compliments. Haven't time for them. They don't sound well coming from such a trifling fellow as you be. Here, you lazy man, I want yon to mail this letter when you get up to the office."

"To your sweetheart, eh? Why, you ought to have left it unsealed so I might read it for my trouble."

"O, you get out! I've got no fellow."

"Now, now, where's Charley Paxton?"

"O, shut up. And bring us a pound of Arbuckle's coffee. They're out of it over at Gladetown. And don't forget that package at Horner's store. If you leave it again, I'll wring your neck. And where's that ribbon you's to bring yesterday?"

"Do you suppose I thought of a five cent errand for a good-for-nothing girl?"

"No."

Abner picked up the lines and made a motion as if to start the team.

"It's in your pocket. Don't bother me. The dishes ain't washed yet and I want to get shut of you —you're no good anyway."

"You never half wash the dishes any time," said Abner in a tormenting tone as he drew a parcel from his pocket and set down the new errand in a memorandum book.

"That's the way it goes," remarked Dodrill as he drove on. "I don't have to pick errands up when I go any place. They come to me. But did you notice that chuffy girl took a half a dozen side looks at you. Good housekeeper. Smart, too. She'd keep up her end of the partnership. They're working the roads to-day, on ahead of us. They throw dirt from the ditch into the wagon track where the first storm will wash it out, and they've thrown several loads of broken rock into that low place for us to bump over. What we spend every dozen or twenty years in patching up our roads would give us some good highways. If it wasn't for that fresh mud, we'd have a right dry road to-day in spite of last evening's rain. Don't take the roads no time to dry off in this country. But in the winter it don't dry like this.

No indeedy. I've saw places aready in these glades where you couldn't pull through with no big load at all at that time o' year."

"Hello there, Mose," he shouted to one of the road workers. "Fooling round, half drunk as usual. Break a hole in yer jug and sober off, so's you can work."

"Go long," drawled the man. "I ain't drunker'n you be."

"I like to devil that fellow," remarked Dodrill to his companion. "Speaking of whiskey bottles puts me in mind of an old-time preacher that used to be round this country. He held up an empty bottle, and said he, 'Let it alone and you have wealth, health, and happiness; let it possess you and it means death, hell, and destruction.'"

The home of Mr. Wirt was a weather-beaten frame dwelling, comparatively large, and shaded by apple trees in full bloom.

"You'll find him all right," said Dodrill. "He'll do what he says. But let me give you a pointer."—and here the driver winked at his friend.—"We're all related in this country. Nearly everybody's an uncle or an aunt, or a second or third cousin to everybody else. That's the way it is, you know, in an old settlement like this. You'll take notice that some family names is very common."

The narrow walk from the front gate was bordered by flowering plants. A rap on the door was presently answered by a dark-eyed girl of eighteen years, who wore a sunbonnet and whose sleeves were turned up.

"Good morning. Won't you come in," was her greeting.

"Is Mr. Wirt at home?" asked Thornwood by way of reply.

"Yes, he's round some place. Come in and I'll go call him. Let me take your hat."

The stranger took a seat in the untenanted living-room. Through a partially open door he had a glimpse of a carpet loom. Mattie Wirt went into the kitchen a moment, and when she reappeared her sleeves were let down, and the removal of her sunbonnet exposed a mass of black, fluffy hair. The brunette had an attractive countenance.

"I've sent one of the boys after him," she remarked. "You must excuse the looks of the room. We've been washing and haven't got it picked up yet."

Thornwood was not talkative in the presence of strangers, and the girl showed equal reserve although not afflicted with shyness. Consequently, their talk was somewhat lacking in freedom until the stranger chanced to look toward the open organ. As a promoter of sociability, the inventor of this instrument deserves the thanks of the human race. The girl did not allow the motion to pass unheeded.

"Perhaps you play?" she suggested with an increase of animation.

"Yes, but don't you?"

"I play some, but not very well. I like to hear others better. I'd be glad if you would."

With a little more coaxing, Mattie would have gone to the organ, but Thornwood was nearer and he went there himself. Without changing her position, which was near the instrument, Mattie sang an accompaniment to the pieces he played. There was time for only three selections, when heavy steps were

heard in the kitchen and Thornwood resumed his chair. As soon as the head of the family entered the room, the girl passed out.

"I think I see you round our way before," observed the gray-bearded man. Didn't you stop over on the pike one morning to talk with a man by a cattle scales ?"

"Yes. that was a little over two weeks ago."

"Thought I wasn't mistook. I was up nigh the barn."

Thornwood decided to use the same tactics he had employed with Mr. Neil. The trustee was a ready talker, and as he had been in other states, especially during his army career, the two men now conversed some time before the visitor edged up to the point of attack.

"Well," replied the farmer to Thornwood's application ; "you are the first new applicant, and while you understand we couldn't promise it to you definite just now, I will favor you, as long as you have come here with the intention of staying. I go in for employing home teachers as far as possible, and as you are going to be one of us, it all amounts to very much the same thing. If Simon Baldwin agrees, you can call the thing settled ; that is, if you get your certificate all right. When I see a teacher has anything like reasonable qualifications, I don't go in for keeping him on the waiting list till the last possible minute. Grant Harley goes out this summer, but the board of education may reappoint him, and when you go back it would be a good plan to see him. Well, if you can content yourself in here, you better stay to dinner. It is getting along in the morning."

"Many thanks, but I believe I better push on to

Mr. Baldwin's. Wouldn't I be more likely to find him home about noon?"

"There might be something in that. But you're welcome to stay here."

"I'll make it up by calling some other time," proposed Thornwood.

"Yes, come again whenever it suits."

Had it not been wash-day, the young man would have offered no objections to staying.

"A right good apple bloom," remarked the farmer, as he followed Thornwood to the porch. "Some years we have a powerful sight of apples. Peaches is not so sure; too many off years."

A walk of half an hour, partly on a highway little used, partly through woods, and partly through fields grown up to blackberry vines, brought the applicant to a foot-log spanning a brook with a marshy brink. Little newts with spotted backs crawled out of his way. The rust-colored slime in the water-course betokened the presence of iron ore. Beyond was a mound of decaying sawdust flanked by a few small piles of weather-stained lumber. The foot-path led into the disused track of a wooden railway, built to convey logs to a portable saw-mill. On the hill above was the little home of Mr. Baldwin. The owner stood in the shade of a large sugar maple. The butt of the tree was encircled by a row of sap sprouts, and a spring issued from among the roots.

"Have some water?" inquired the man, holding out a gourd. "This is a fine spring; cool and sweet, and never runs dry."

At what Thornwood considered a proper moment, he tendered his application for the school.

"I don't know of anything much in the way," re-

plied Baldwin. If Wirt is willing, I am. I judge you have a right good education and that's what we need in a teacher. We want as well qualified ones as we can get. Some teachers don't do justice to their schools. But come in the house and have a bite of dinner with us."

Like nearly all the middle-aged men of these hills, the host had been a soldier of the federal army, and he now went to talking of his military experiences until his wife introduced a digression.

"Tell the gentleman that ghost story you heard when you's in camp at Buckhannon. He might like to hear it. It was a strange thing."

"I like to hear anything that's unusual," replied the guest.

"All right, then," assented Baldwin.

A moment later the farmer had finished his meal. He took off the glasses through which he had surveyed the eatables, leaned back in his chair, and thumbed his fork with his right hand as that member rested on the table.

"My regiment was in camp at Buckhannon," said Baldwin in a deliberate manner, as though recalling the circumstance step by step. "That was in January of sixty-two. A man named Peet shared my tent with me. He was older than me, and I always found him perfectly reliable. Never knew him to take a drink of liquor. His habits were always good.

"Well, one night he went with some other fellows out several miles into the country to a party. He did not get in till after ten. He sat down by the bunk and seemed very much excited about something. I had woke up when he come in. I asked him what was the matter, and he said he would tell

me if I didn't tell anyone else. He said he didn't want others to make fun of him. So he went on and told me.

"He didn't stay to the party but a little bit. It was a rough, whiskey-drinking crowd and he did not like to be in it. He started back alone. He come into the pike that runs from Buckhannon to Weston, half a mile beyond a church that stood nigh the road. When he had come nigh the church, he looked and see what he hadn't noticed before. It was lit up and he could hear singing, praying, and shouting. He thought of course some meeting was going on there. When he had come tolerable close, the lights went out all at once. He thought then the meeting had broke up, and he hurried on, so as to have company back to town. But when he got close up, he couldn't see a single soul. Everything was perfectly still. He didn't know what to make of all that. There had not been time for the people to have got away. He concluded he'd look into the matter a little. So he turned out of the road and went close up to the church. He couldn't hear a sound. He tried the door and found it was locked. Then he thought his senses must have fooled him in some way and he started on.

"He had got twenty-five steps away, perhaps, when he could hear the singing and praying again. He stood and listened. He could make out words and even tell the hymn they was singing. He looked around and see the windows lit up again. He could distinguish heads inside. He thought he'd make another attempt to fathom the mystery, and he went back to the door, but as soon as he put his foot on the step the voices ceased. He tried the door and

shook it, but it was still locked. He went round to a window and tried to look in, but couldn't see nothing. Everything was perfectly dark and still.

"By this time he was feeling queer. He began to get scared. He started off once more, but walked slow at first. He got about twice as far away that time, and then he heard the singing, praying, and shouting as plain as ever and could distinguish words. He looked round once more, and there was the house lit up again and he could see the heads inside the windows. That was enough for him. He broke into a run and made good time back to camp.

"Several days after that, a citizen come into town to get dogs to go hunting. My company was on drill, but I was not well that day and had charge of the quarters. I found that he lived not far from that very church. I rather promised Peet I wouldn't tell what he had saw, but I wanted to know something about the matter myself, and I told him what Peet told me. While the man was listening, I couldn't see as he showed much interest in my account. When I got through, he said those sights were a matter of common report among his neighbors. He told me he never seen them for himself, but had talked with people who had. Then he told me how the people accounted for those sights.

"That winter nine years before, a young man was seeking religion, but was not known to have become converted. It was in that condition of things and while the meeting was still going on, that he was one day hauling some logs on a sled. He was sitting on the front end of the sled, when the stay-chain come loose and a log slid out and run agen the horses' heels. They were going down a grade at that time.

The team took fright and the fellow was thrown forrerd and kicked to death. Every winter since then these manifestations had been seen.

"The man asked me whether I thought the young fellow was saved or not. I had no opinion to offer in those days. He said the people thought he was saved, and they believed that heavenly angels came at every anniversary to visit the church and rejoice over his conversion.

"I didn't see that for myself, but I will now tell you a ghost story of my own observation.

"I had been over in the south end of the county and was coming home. It was along toward midnight. The sky was not quite clear. There were little patches of clouds, but the moon was nearly full and it was perfectly easy to make out an object. I was riding my horse and was perfectly awake. I was as calm as I am now. There was nothing to make me the least bit excited. I had come close up to the cemetery that lies several miles south of here, when I see a white object moving among the tombstones toward the fence. It passed through the fence into the road. It didn't appear to squeeze through, but passed through just as a shadow or a ray of light would. At first I thought it must be a sheep, but as I come nigher, I see it had the form of a woman's white skirt. I poked up my horse and rode faster until I was close onto it. That was what it looked like—a woman's white skirt standing upright and gliding along the surface of the ground. I lent forrerd to get a close view, but had to hold my horse back to keep from stepping on it, as it were. Presently it took the form of a woman in a white dress, and just on the other side of it from me I see the

figure of a man in a black suit and white shirt. Their faces were as white as paper, but I could not make out any features distinctly; at least, not so's to identify the faces with any persons I ever see. Their figures did not appear substantial; they looked shadowy. But to make sure, I spoke. There was no answer. I rode on and then all at once they disappeared. Before I got home I met a man who was a sure enough man, for I talked with him. I've known sheep or cattle to cause people to think they saw ghosts, but there was nothing of the sort in this case. Now, Mr. Thornwood, if you can account for all these sights in any ordinary way, you will do better than I have ever been able to make out."

## V

### Cupid Shoots an Arrow

Woman's warm heart and gentle hand, in
God's eternal plan,
Were made to soften, sooth, refine, exalt,
and comfort man.—*Sarah J. Hale.*

Above the entrance of the leading store in Gladetown was a sign bearing the legend: "U. G. Harley, Gen. Mdse." The proprietor had been named after the hero of Appomattox.

The store resembled many others of this mountain land in being a two-story building with its gables facing the street. A platform extended across the front end and lying upon it at this time was an empty oil barrel. In front of the platform were several hitching posts. Within the building were two lower rooms, and counters occupied three sides of the front apartment. In the middle space was an upright coal stove. The ash-box was partly drawn out, and this, as well as the coal-hod, was a target for the tobacco-using frequenters of the place. Around the stove were a few small chairs, originally splint-bottomed. One of these chairs had lost a part of its back, and the ruptured seat of another had been re-enforced with the cover of a dry goods box. The postoffice department was at the front end of a counter.

Tom Ross had just sprinkled the floor and swept out as much of the dust as he could, but the worn surface refused to give up the whole of the accumu-

lation. A portion remained as a nest-egg for another sweeping.

Thornwood came in with a letter to mail. No one but the clerk was in the room.

"I may not be here all summer," said Tom. "Don't say anything about it, please. I've a big notion to go to the business college another term or two. I was there a year ago, but didn't stay long enough. Wish now I had. This place is all right, bnt then a fellow wants something that pays better than a country store."

Tom did not pursue the topic just then. Maxwell Woolpert. the handy man of the village, entered, took a chair, and proceeded to light a cigar.

"How are you getting along, Mr. Thornwood?" he inquired of the new arrival, to whom he was an utter stranger.

"Quite well, I consider."

"Haven't seen you round since the day you came. You must keep close to business. Been here nigh onto a week, haven't you?"

"Since last Thursday. I was here in the store Saturday. The next day was so wet we all stayed under cover."

"And then it wasn't preaching day," remarked Woolpert. "Hope you'll continue to like. They say you have carpentered some."

"A little, in a rough way."

"Reckon you don't have much to do with oak lumber out in your country?"

"Seldom use anything but pine."

"That's fun, working in pine," observed Woolpert. "We don't use no pine for building material here.

Don't have it handy enough. We saw our own oak lumber and use that."

Just then the form of a man darkened the open doorway.

"Hello, Jake, how are you?" said Woolpert in salutation.

"Can't complain."

"But what brings you in here to loaf this fine day?" demanded the smoker.

"To see if Mack Woolpert was still bumming in Grant's store. O, I had to get a horse shod. Say, Mack, can you trim my hair this morning?"

"I reckon I can spare that much time. Where's your shears, Tom ?"

As the clerk produced the shears, the last comer seated himself between the stove and the entrance.

Another man now sauntered into the room, carrying his hands in the pockets of his ragged overalls. He was tall and gaunt and had a straggling brown beard. Tom at once strode forward and confronted him.

"Anything you will have to-day, Jud?"

"Got any of them new currycombs yet?"

"Yes, here's one. Anything else this morning?"

"No, reckon not," drawled Jud, taking the scratching implement in his hand, elevating himself to the edge of the counter, and sitting thereon. "I come in to get a mare shod."

The clerk went behind the counter and entered the purchase on the day-book.

"Any news out your way, Jud?" inquired Woolpert, without looking up from his hair-cutting.

"No, nothing much. Ain't ben round a great sight. I was feeling doggoned rough for several

days, but I'm some better now. Got a bottle o' medicine an' that's helpin'me. Don't want to get on the lift jest yet, nuther. They say Ben Zigler's woman is a leetle dauncy, but I reckon she's goin' about still."

"How's Zigler making it on the Hedrick farm?"

"Sort o' slow like. He won't do no good there. Ornriest place in that whole corner. That's right now."

"That's the place Mossman used to live on," pursued Woolpert. "They say he harvested his buckwheat with a shears and a market basket. He'd clip off a stalk of buckwheat, and then crawl around on his hands and knees until he could find another one. When he got his basket full, he would go to the barn. His horses got so dogged weak, he had to fix some poles alongside their legs and buckle 'em on with straps, so the animals could stand up."

A woman rode up to a hitching-post, and Tom went outside to receive her basket of eggs and to assist her in dismounting.

"What will you have to-day, Mrs. Clemm?" inquired Tom, preceding the woman into the store.

"Got any more of that coffee of the brand I ben gettin'?"

"No, but we have another sort that people brag on a good bit. We expect some more of the kind you like in a few days."

"Then I'll wait a bit. O, I'll take five cents worth of salt and two pounds of sugar and ten cents in snuff."

Another man, older than any of the group within, now appeared at the doorway. His name was Ervin Custer.

"Right tough looking crowd," was his observation. "Hardly safe to come in."

He nevertheless came forward and took a chair which he tilted against the counter. He put one foot on the round and crossed his legs. Tom did not run up to him to see what he might want. The last comer frequented the store so often that the clerk usually waited for him to make known his errands.

"Terrible rough crowd now that you are here, Erv," remarked Woolpert.

A girl with a letter in her hand next entered and stood before the postal counter. Tom at once hurried in that direction.

"Tom, I want you to mail this," said the girl, throwing down the necessary coins. "And say, Tom, you must have a piece for the League next Sunday night."

"You can get along without me," protested Tom.

"No, I can't. It's my turn to lead. You mind now," said the girl, shaking the letter in his face and then tossing it to the counter.

"There's Mr. Thornwood," suggested Tom. "He'll get you something, I reckon."

"Yes, you will, won't you, Mr. Thornwood," said the girl turning toward the newcomer with a persuasive smile and dropping the tone of familiarity in which she had addressed the clerk. The stranger had never seen her before and did not know her name.

"For the Epworth League?" he inquired.

"Yes, sir. We have a League up here and it meets every Sunday night. It's my turn to lead next time and I'd be pleased to have you read or speak something."

"I'll see, but I can't promise not to disappoint you."

"Don't do that, please," said the girl, turning to pass out of the door.

"We'll look out for him, Suse," remarked Woolpert.

"I'll expect you to be on hand too," rejoined Susan from the platform.

"Now, Mack, don't you wish you hadn't said nothing?" exclaimed Tom Ross with a chuckle.

"One might as well give in when the girls come round to coax like that," observed Custer.

"There's Mr. Harley coming now," said Tom to Thornwood in an undertone.

The newcomer met the merchant on the platform. Grant Harley was of medium size and dark complexion, and his brown hair was much inclined to lop downward in front.

"I'd like to talk with you a moment," said Thornwood.

"All right," returned Harley, "We might talk out here by the hitching-post."

"Wonder what that fellow wants of Grant?" remarked Custer inquiringly.

"You'll have to ask him," replied the clerk.

"Tom," said Woolpert, "don't you wish you had some dandy little girl to write letters to you."

"Poor fellow," added Custer. "He don't know a love-letter when he sees one."

"Where'd you get hold of any such stuff as that?" demanded the young man.

"Now, Tom, Tommy," expostulated Woolpert, "didn't you say you never see a letter that a girl wrote?"

"Never said anything of the kind."

"Tom feels bad," said Custer. "He's been off the hooks ever since Sunday a week ago, when Dave Bruce went home with Lizzie."

"Makes no difference to me who she goes with," growled Tom, flying into the storage room on a make-believe errand.

"There's Em coming over to the store," observed Custer, as he glanced through the open door. "This new fellow has got started back to Hozy's, and she had to pass the time of day with him."

"Next time he'll stop to chin with her," put in Woolpert.

"Then you fellows will have a chance to see if you can make anything off of him," said Tom, with an air of triumph.

Emma Brandon, the young woman who now came into the store, was a little above the average height and inclined to plumpness. Her face was very comely, with its fair, fresh complexion, rosy cheeks, good features, and bright, expressive brown eyes. Her dark-brown hair was worn short, and in her livelier moods her full red lips were seen to part slightly. At this moment she had a basket on her arm and went at once to the rear counter.

"Em," remarked Woolpert, "you look too pleased. Next time Wilbur Dorr comes round, we'll have to tell him there's a new coon in town and that he will have to look out for him."

"Wilbur won't be round before the holidays," declared Custer. "A fellow braking on the railroad can't get out here very often. This chap will have time enough to cut him out."

"Like as not," was Emma's laughing reply.

## VI

### One Intention Giving Way

Flowers are love's truest language.—*Park Benjamin.*

The Gladetown church stood on the border of the little village, and the schoolhouse was near by. On the other side of the church and a little lower down the same slope was a cemetery, wherein many of the graves were marked with marble headstones and a few with granite monuments. Several tall, slender evergreens imparted a funereal aspect to the inclosure. The white frame church was surmounted with a bell tower, and the long windows were of frosted glass.

Thornwood did not start until after he heard the pealing of the first bell, and he feared he would be somewhat late. But on his arrival he found only the boy sexton and two companions sitting on the plank steps by the open door. All were neatly dressed in black suits. The people gathered slowly, some coming in buggies, some on horseback, and some afoot. Young girls and older ones, nearly all in white dresses, came by twos and threes and entered the house at once, while the boys and many of the men lingered in the warm, fresh sunshine without until the sound of the opening hymn caused them to enter. Some of the women and girls came with bunches of flowers which they took to the cemetery to lay on the graves of departed friends and relatives.

The floor of the church was covered with matting,

and the plain, open pews were not fastened in their places. The attendants sat wherever they pleased, and did not always choose a regular spot. Neither was there any hard and fast line between the sexes, although men alone used the side benches at the right of the room. There was a quite noticeable tendency to fill the rear seats at the expense of those near the pulpit. The organ stood near a front corner and the choir sat with their backs to the side of the room.

At the close of the Sunday school, which preceded the preaching service, nearly everyone went outside for a breath of fresh air and a change of position. The men and boys stood in groups or squatted on the grass, while the older girls linked arms and strolled down the road.

At the final dismissal the male element made a rather prompt exit and formed a wide semi-circle around the door. Some went to chatting with their neighbors, while others stood scrutinizing the women and girls who thronged the doorway and maintained a busy talk as they slowly filed out. It was some time before the yard was clear.

"Come along down and take dinner with us," said Custer to a man and his wife who were moving away, the former carrying a young child in his arms.

"Not to-day, Erv," replied the father. "We would stay too long. We are expecting Frank and his folks over from Morgantown."

"Let them break into the house and get their own snack," returned Custer. "But say, Bunk, that sermon was intended for you. Didn't the preacher just sandpaper you off good?"

"Yes, I reckon we both needed it."

Ervin Custer sought out another friend to invite to dinner.

"Going home with us?" inquired Mrs. Neil of Nellie Sperry, a girl with fair complexion and almost flaxen hair.

"Think I'll have to this time," replied Nellie. "I've been promising to come over for so long."

"We'll ride in the buggy," resumed Mrs. Neil. "A day like this it won't hurt the men folks to walk. Hozy," she added, raising her voice, "Nellie and I are going in the buggy."

"All right," replied Mr. Neil, "I guess Jim and me can find the way home. Joe and Clara are coming down, too. They'll drive behind you folks."

"There, old woman," said Susan Pugh to Mrs. Neil. "You got left. You's going to introduce me to that new fellow, and now he's sliding off with your man and Dave Bruce. I don't see anyone to go home with me now. I don't like that just a little bit. But never you mind. I'll comb his hair for him first chance I get."

As Thornwood and his employer moved away, a man passed them riding horseback and carrying his daughter behind him.

"Believe I'll join you, if you can stand my company," remarked a young man to Mr. Neil. The speaker resembled Thornwood in figure as well as in having a smooth face.

"Mr. Thornwood," said Neil, "this is Mr. David Bruce that you have heard me speak of. He lives beyond us. Mr. Bruce, Mr. Thornwood."

"Glad to meet you," said Mr. Bruce. "You are from Ohio, I understand?"

"Yes, that state is the only home I ever knew."

"I have not been outside of my own very much," returned Bruce. "But in this county you can't lose me very easy."

"Mr. Bruce used to be in Harley's store," observed Neil.

"Yes," said Bruce, "a few years ago I was where Tom is. I am one of the clerk graduates that have gone out from that store."

"By the way, Dave," said Neil, "I wonder what's up between you and some of the other boys? I noticed some rather straight looks over at church today."

"Hadn't you heard of it?" inquired Bruce with a rather dry laugh.

"Why, no, I heard nothing."

"Night before last," explained David, "there was a party of us over at Riddle s barn for band practice. It was right warm that night, and we thought we'd stay in the barn and sleep on the hay. Henry woke up after a bit and found the other fellows had thrown a litter of young pigs onto us. Then they skipped. The little pigs were scolding and crawling over us, and the old sow we could hear grunting out her indignation. We gathered up the pigs and put them back and then we traced the boys to Carman's barn. We laid low a while and then we searched around till we could hear them snoring in a hollow of the hay mow. Henry got up in the mow and I passed him a bucket of cold spring water, and he just let them have it."

"Then you lit out?" suggested Neil.

"Yes, we had urgent business somewhere else just then. We could hear the boys spluttering and growling. They tried to sick the dog on us, but he

wouldn't bark. We thought we wouldn't try any more barns and we slept the balance of the night at Riddle's. The other boys scattered and went home."

"They seemed to get the wettest of that prank," remarked Neil.

"They were dry enough to-day," said Bruce. "Dry in two ways."

"I suppose," continued Neil, "that you know nothing of any boys who went to Dave Church's one night with a cow-bell and got him to come out and follow them several times round the field with a lantern, thinking it was a cow that broke in."

"I heard about that," said Bruce. "Okey saw them after a while and he said, 'Why, pap, it's just the boys.' "

"Stop in for dinner, Dave," said the farmer as they drew near his house. "Might as well join our crowd and then it will be handier for you to go up to League to-night."

"Well, don't mind if I do stop in this time. It's been quite a while since I've been to your house. But I shall not be up to League this time, though I most always go when I'm home."

"Then I think we'll have to send Nellie home with Thornwood and get him broke in to waiting on the girls," remarked Neil.

"I reckon Mr. Thornwood won't kick on that," laughed their companion.

Eight persons gathered around Mr. Neil's dinner table to share the best meal that appeared during the week, and it was several hours before his company left.

Toward the close of the day Thornwood walked through a field to have for a while the companion-

ship of his own thoughts. The slanting rays of the sun came over the wooded top of Chestnut Ridge and bronght into plainest view several houses on the rising ground toward the east. A tall, conspicuous tree marked the summit of Potato Hole Knob. Shadows were already beginning to gather on the eastward-facing slopes. But to the newcomer the hills did not seem so steep as at first, and the ever-changing view was inspiring him with a growing attachment.

It had now been almost a month since he left home. He had secured work the very day following his arrival, and not until after he began to earn, did he find it necessary to open his pocket-book. Before him was the assurance of employment for at least seven months. He was also finding pleasant, congenial acquaintances. With his undertaking so very auspiciously begun, he was acquiring a buoyancy of feeling to which he had long been a stranger.

In the steps one has to take in coming to know an unfamiliar home, there is a subtle interest. Everything is new, and in this novelty is a romantic charm, to which only the dullest or the most matter-of-fact nature appears insensible. The effect on the individual is to impart a degree of elasticity to his feelings; he becomes rejuvenated. The man who clings throughout life to the spot where he was born, seems older at a given age than the one who through travel or change of residence has acquired more breadth of mind and renewed his freshness of spirit.

At the close of the month there was a holiday. Ex-soldiers were quite common in the community, and it was a point with them that Memorial Day should not pass without recognition. In fact, the

occasion was more strictly observed in Gladetown than even the Fourth of July.

Farm work was generally suspended. Flowers, both wild and cultivated, were put under liberal tribute, and women, girls, and sometimes boys, were engaged in forming them into wreaths and other designs. At a late hour in the morning a large crowd assembled at the village church, and it was drawn from a wider radius than in the case of the Sunday congregations. The survivors of the war, few of whom were not distinctly gray, were present in considerable force, and many appeared in suits of army blue, to which their faded regimental badges were attached.

There was a speech by the resident pastor, a talk by one of the veterans, and the singing of hymns selected for the occasion. A column, headed by the old soldiers, marching in twos, was then formed outside the door, and the procession passed through the cemetery, placing wreaths on all the graves of veterans. But the other graves were by no means overlooked.

As the crowd began to disperse, David Bruce touched Thornwood's arm.

"How do you do, Mr. Thornwood? How would you like to go up on this little knob back of the village? Have you been there yet?"

"No, and I would like to go up."

"All right then. Say we do. It isn't near five minutes walk and this is an unusually clear, bright day. We'll have plenty time yet to find our dinners."

The knob was seemingly a tame affair when viewed from the base. Yet the hills of West Virginia are

often deceptive, and the newcomer was surprised at the amount of climbing required in the ascent.

"Let's set down under this chestnut," proposed Bruce. "We can look right down on the village and all over the glades. This is an uncommonly forward season. Everything looks so green and fresh. Even the rows of corn are beginning to show."

"This is the prettiest view I have seen in this country yet," was the enthusiastic reply. "The elevations appear so softened down that the landscape does not seem mountainous. It looks from here more like a rolling, grassy plain. The only thing that appears at all like a mountain is that little piece of blue ridge way off in the south."

The elevated borders of the picture showed a prevalence of woodland, but throughout the basin the view was dominated by meadows and pastures, these being traversed in every possible direction by the numerous rail fences. The acreage of field crops was comparatively small. Fine shade trees appeared along roadsides and fences, and occasionally in the midst of the fields. The white-painted farmhouses, nestling in the broad depressions, went far to beautify the prospect.

To Thornwood, who was used to a smooth region, where the farms had been laid out by a government survey and where the fences were uniformly straight, there had seemed a want of system in the way the fences curved about the hillsides and glades. Yet he was now beginning to discern that the regularity to which he had been accustomed would destroy the harmony of the present picture.

"You may go out on this pike three miles," said Bruce, "and you will pass only two groves ; so small

they hardly count. I can remember when it was woods on one side or the other the whole distance. The trees are being thinned out of this country. Good saw logs are not plenty any more. Well, you got the promise of the school all right?"

"Yes, it came so easy it was almost no trouble at all."

"Good for you. You'll come out all right on the school business. I suppose this is only the second time you have seen a Gladetown crowd. How do you find our congregations up here in the backwoods?"

"I shall have to admit that when I left home I thought I was going to find it rather backwoodsy in this section, but I am agreeably disappointed. Your people when they get out as they did to-day make a a good appearance."

"Yes," affirmed Bruce "We people here wear any old thing about our work, but on Sundays and holidays and such like, you will find us pretty well dressed."

"And your girls," continued the newcomer, "have fairer, fresher complexions than up in northern Ohio, where the cold, raw winds coming off the great lakes are not favorable to good looks."

"Then you do notice the girls after all," said Bruce looking up with a quizzical expression.

"What made you think otherwise?"

"I didn't take you to be what they call a ladies' man. Some fellows would have known every girl within three miles before they'd been here as long as you have."

"And I am hardly acquainted with one," replied

Thornwood. "I'm not built like some people and I suppose I can't help it. I go slow."

"Well," exclaimed Bruce a few moments later. "I don't know how it is with you, but I begin to feel dinnerish."

The two friends rejoined the lessening crowd in the church yard and were invited to dinner by Grant Harley.

Two weeks later, Mr. Neil injected a variation into the duties asked of his employee.

"I have," said he, "the promise of five gallons of cherries from the next farm if I can get them picked. So I see no way but to send you for them."

With a tin pail on each arm, Thornwood sauntered across a broad swale and climbed a steep rise to the flat topped summit of a ridge. Here, by the side of a high broad fence was a row of well laden cherry trees. Just before he gained the top of the hill, he saw three female forms following the fence on the farther side. They were approaching the trees from another direction.

When they turned their sunbonnets to see who was coming up the ascent, he recognized their faces as those of Emma Brandon and her sisters, Daisy and Grace. He had seen Emma but twice, and when he passed her in the village street, where he returned her salutation, he did not know who she was. Yet he did not let the grass grow under his feet before he learned her identity from the Neils.

He had never met Emma since, but he would have to admit that she was the only young lady in Gladetown in whom he took a particular interest. Yet he did not feel certain that she would care a straw for him. He did not know but that she was receiving

attentions from some would-be suitor. He did not know but that she was engaged. However, all these were questions he thought little about. They were secondary considerations with Thornwood, as they are with all of Cupid's victims.

It takes a very short time for the young man transplanted to a new home to show a preference for a certain one of the female faces he there meets. The favored one may be a considerable remove from his ideal, since the choice of the eye is more potent than the choice of the imagination. Yet the choice will declare itself, be it what it may. If he make still another change of scene, remaining free from any plighted allegiance, there will be a similar result, even though the new choice may differ markedly from the last. The tendrils of affection are sure to search out an object. That they will center themselves somewhere, is as true as that love cannot exist in the absence of the being toward whom it may go out. And furthermore, the stranger's admiration must be very deftly concealed, if the object thereof does not speedily become aware of its existence. The instincts rarely go far astray, and the window of the soul most often meets a reciprocating glance.

Womankind is romantic, and the young man who is a stranger is invested with attributes he may not very fully possess. He will be accepted in preference to the young man who has grown up in the very neighborhood.

The junior sisters had been pointed out to Thornwood by Bruce. They were considerably younger than Emma and were among his prospective pupils.

There are certain occasions when the lack of a formal introduction is not felt by either party.

Thornwood had already found the observance of this ceremony considerably neglected by the people with whom he had come to live. And he was conscious that his name as well as his face was known to every person in and around the village.

"Which of us is to get there first?" inquired Thornwood.

"It looks like an even thing," laughed Emma.

"I don't suppose any of us could be trespassers," remarked the young man. "I am not to pick over five gallons and that much can easily be found on just one of these trees. I think I had better climb into the top and leave you to pick those that are handier to get hold of. The branches hang very low."

"And when we run out of cherries, perhaps you will go out on the limbs and hold them down for us," suggested Emma.

"There's nothing like being generally useful, is there?" remarked the newcomer.

He had given words of recognition to the younger sisters, who did not then take a part in the conversation.

"I think it is enough to climb this steep hill without climbing a tree the next thing," remarked Emma. "We had the advantage over you, for we got up this ridge at the end next the town where it isn't so steep. Look at that apple orchard over on the other knob. An apple could be made to roll half way down that hill."

"And I have some advantage up here in the tree," said Thornwood. "I can keep my pail closer to my picking."

"I'm told you are a good organ player," remarked Emma through the branches.

"I wonder how you found out. I have not touched an instrument since I came to Gladetown. There's none at Mr. Neil's. O, I think I see now. Miss Wirt told you."

"She didn't tell me, but the news came from there."

"Indirectly, then. But I fear Miss Wirt is not a judge if she calls me a good player."

"Perhaps we'd be better judges if we had a chance."

Was this meant as a hint?

"Maybe you have an organ?" suggested the man in the tree.

"Yes, sir."

"Of course you play it?"

"Yes, some, but not very well. I've only taken a few lessons. Daisy here can play better than I do, and she hasn't taken any lessons yet."

"We'd like for you to come in some evening and show us," said Daisy.

Why could not the girl have waited for him to make the suggestion? Did the sisters think the newcomer slow of understanding?

"I would be pleased to do so if that would be agreeable," he replied.

"Come in any evening you like," said Emma.

"Are these the only sisters you have?"

"Yes, except our baby sister, Mary. She is only two years old."

But for a reason already pointed out, Thornwood did not see fit to make use of the invitation until a week had elapsed. It was twilight when he appeared at the gate before the Brandon house. Emma was weeding a flower bed. A humming-bird was flitting about the rose-bush in the corner of the yard.

Daisy and Grace were clearing up the supper dishes, as was revealed by a clatter of knives and plates.

"Will you accept a buttonhole bouquet?" inquired Emma, brushing away some leaves that clung to her apron.

"With pleasure."

Thereupon Emma gave him a bunch of twigs from a syringa bush and they went into the sitting room, where for a little while the organ was put to use. But darkness comes late at the summer solstice and Thornwood did not make a long call. He saw no members of the family save the three sisters, and he was not told in words whether he might call again or not. The stranger did not like to assume that he could, neither did he then choose to put an inquiry which would bring the question to a test. And as he walked toward Neil's, looking at the evening lights which glittered from the broad ridge lying toward the east, he declared he would follow the resolution he had made when quitting his Ohio home.

## VII

### The Story of an Umbrella

> Give me but
> Something whereunto I may bind my heart,
> Something to love, to rest upon, to clasp
> Affection's tendrils round.—*Mrs. Hemans.*

The farmhouse of Hosea Neil lay at some distance from the village, and for a while the new employee spent his leisure time at the new home. The farmer and his wife were very companionable, and when there was no one present to talk to, there was always something to read, the sitting-room table being quite well supplied with newspapers and other periodicals. Thornwood was scarcely a bookworm, yet he possessed the reading habit, and as he also had the acquirement of being company to himself, the long hours of work and short hours of leisure did not for a time seem lacking in interest.

He had gone into the village but seldom, and never but the once had he spent an evening away from his employer's home. As a matter, of course, his circle of acquaintance widened slowly. The presence and peculiarities of the stranger coming into an old community are speedily known. It is a quick process for the many to know the personality of the one, but a far slower process for the one to know the individuality of the many. Yet Thornwood was in no hurry to build up a long list of acquaintances. He remembered the advice of his father.

"If you ever go into a strange neighborhood to live," said the elder Thornwood, "don't be in a sweat

to know everybody at once. Don't force yonrself on people and don't respond too readily to the approaches of gushy people. Such friends are not apt to hold out. Don't be too distant with people, either, but don't be too fresh. Attend to your own business and leave them to attend to theirs. Take your time to know them and give them time to know you. There are several sides to some folks, and you must not be too sure you know just what a person is after seeing him two or three times. Go slow, and in the long run you will stand better with your new neighbors than if you try to carry things with a rush. It takes a year to know the ins and outs of a new home—and you don't know them all then."

From the very outset Thornwood had found in this mountain valley something which was prepossesing. He was still learning that his intuitions were not at fault. His home with Mr. Neil was entirely pleasant and his new friends were proving helpful as well as congenial. And now that he was away from the hampering and discouraging influences under which he had chafed, he was sensible of a growth in self-confidence. Just what form his future was going to take, he could not yet discern; but at all events he was not going to borrow much trouble on that score. His work was humble and his pay was small, yet he was fortunate in not being one of those who make themselves miserable because they are not in some high-salaried post or in some pretentious calling.

But as time went on, the farmhouse of Mr. Neil did not content him so readily as at first. He had found a loadstone without, and this was exerting more power than the cold, calculating resolution he had brought with him from the Buckeye State. So

one evening he did his chores more speedily than usual, changed his clothes, and set his feet toward the village. The day's mail had been brought to the house and he did not intend buying anything at the stores. But that did not matter. Neither did it matter that only three days had elapsed since he was at Emma's home, and that he was not quite certain whether she would now care to see him. His inner consciousness told him she did care to see him. Still, he had no settled determination to visit the Brandon house. But he was going to the village anyway.

The men who frequented Harley's store had gathered outside, and Thornwood, who was averse to loafing for the sake of loafing, went so far as to sit a few moments on the edge of the platform and join in the conversation. Then he went inside the store and asked Tom Ross the price of a few articles which he had no thought of buying. Finally he passed out, walking up the village street and down the hillside beyond.

He did not appear to look toward the Brandon home as he went along, yet he twisted his eyes in that direction, and if Emma had been on the porch or in the front yard, he would have contrived to notice the circumstance. But she was not there and he continued to walk. There was nothing of particular interest in the lonely slope down which he strolled. He gave the least possible heed to the objects along the road, and as he had been working all day the exercise was not necessary. So it was not long before he turned about. On regaining the top of the assent, he saw Emma come out of the nearest house. Thornwood immediately began to walk faster; but

perhaps this was merely because it was growing dark and he wished to hurry back to Neil's.

"Why, good evening, Mr. Thornwood," said Emma, when she looked about and heard the newcomer's salutation. "You are coming in from a new direction, aren't you?"

"Yes, rather so. I just thought I would take a turn down the road a little piece."

If the stranger had been more candid, he would have said the walk was one of the most purposeless that he ever took.

The main street in Gladetown is very short, and there had been little opportunity for chat when they came to the gate leading into the Brandon dooryard.

"Won't you come in?" asked Emma, laying her hand on the latch.

The stranger thought a moment, but only a moment. Had the words come from almost anyone else, he would have doubted whether they were anything more than an expression of courtesy. He was not entirely sure in this instance. But it is an old maxim that "circumstances alter cases." When a door is ajar, it is easy to push it open. Emma had asked him into the house and he was not going to decline. He had come to the village to pass the evening in her society if he could find any pretext for doing so. And besides, the gate was too low to lean upon with any satisfaction.

"Take a chair if you can see one," said Emma. "I shall have to strike a light. The girls are not in. I think they must have gone over to Clate's."

Thornwood was glad the sisters were out, and he hoped they would be in no hurry to come back.

"Won't you play some, Mr. Thornwood? We en-

joyed your playing so much when you were here the other day. I don't get much chance these busy days and then I can't play very good nohow."

The caller at once complied, but there was always an interlude of talk between the selections he played.

"Don't you ever get homesick?" asked Emma rather suddenly. "You are a long way from where you used to live. Perhaps you will go back to see your folks before your school begins?"

These questions could have been answered very briefly and it was Thornwood's first impulse to do so. But in another instant he thought he saw what the girl was driving at, and he resolved to answer accordingly. He wheeled about on the organ stool, but it was not long before he transferred himself to a rocker and the organ remained silent the rest of the evening. When young people are interested in one another, each prefers listening to the other's voice rather than to the tones of any musical instrument.

"No," said Thornwood, "I don't get homesick, although, of course, I miss my old home. I have been away before. I was six months in a town nearly fifty miles from where my folks live, and I was home only once in that time. No, I don't get homesick easily. I left with the intention of staying away, perhaps for all time, and unless there should be sickness at home or some great calamity, I shall not go back anyways soon. I don't intend going back before school begins. Outside of my own folks and a few near relatives, there is very little to call me back."

This final sentence was very innocently put, but the very same was true of the question Emma had just asked.

"Don't you like it back there?" she now inquired.

"Yes, it is a good place to live in, but I thought I would break away from early associations and go among strangers. I believed I would stand on a fairer footing then."

"So you came to this country to stay?"

"A while at least. Any more than that I couldn't promise anyone, even myself."

"They tell me you are a native of here?"

"So I am, but if I hadn't been told that, I wouldn't have known it. It is the home of my mother's people, and yet it was a perfectly strange country to me whem I came here in the spring."

"Sometimes I think I would like to go way off somewhere," observed the girl in a more serious tone than she had yet assumed. "I like to take trips off, but I've had very little chance so far. I have two uncles way out in the West, and one of them I never saw."

"Isn't that the way with most of us?" suggested Thornwood. "There are lots of people who somehow crave a change, and they don't always know just what they want."

"Maybe it's because we'd like to see some things round us a little different from what they are, and we imagine we'll find them better some place else."

"And half the time we are mistaken," added Thornwood.

"That may be," assented Emma. "Perhaps it is better after all to stay where you are and do what you can to work things up, instead of running away from what you don't just like. Every little while some man moves away and goes into some other state or into some town, and perhaps his old home

stays empty. There's not enough to keep our people here. The boys, when they grow up, go off to public works, or some place else, and sometimes the girls go away to work. We see people going all the while, but hardly ever see one coming in, and that makes us feel lonesome just a little. We are in a world by ourselves I reckon. We don't get to see much in a little place like this, way off to one side from anywhere. There seems nothing for the men when they are not at work but to sit round the store. Once in a big while a show comes round, and we have a few picnics, festivals, exhibitions, and such like, either here or some place near by."

"Yes, you people think you miss considerable," replied Thornwood. "But do you know I rather like the change and the quiet? Since I came to Gladetown I've never heard a railroad whistle but just once, although I often hear the steamboat whistle over at Morgantown. Now there's a railroad through one corner of my father's farm, and trains go rattling by at least twenty times in a day. And only two miles away is a railroad town. Noise enough where we lived. Sometimes too much. There is something about this mountain country that suits me, I can hardly tell what."

"Well," remarked Emma, "I believe I'd just a little sooner take such a place as you came from. But maybe a railroad may come after a while and then we'll be more in the world."

"You seem to be the housekeeper here at home," said Thornwood, changing the conversation.

"O yes, I lead off in that. Part of the time, though, I am with some others of our folks. Sometimes here

and sometimes there. Don't have much time for play."

The talk now flowed into a lighter channel and the sisters returned before the caller took his leave. Nothing was said at the door as to the acceptability of his return, but before he was half way to Neil's he noticed that he had forgotten his umbrella. He was glad that he had forgotten it. He was also glad that the distance between the houses was such that Emma would not be likely to send it home by one of her sisters. But he must have his property again. Surely so. It would not do to go without so useful an article during that showery summer. Umbrellas serve more than one purpose besides getting lent easily or borrowed.

So in a few days he again appeared at the Brandon house.

"I noticed you forgot your umbrella," said Emma after they had been chatting some time.

"Yes," replied Thornwood. "there was some appearance of rain that evening and I took it with me. I have scarcely used it since I came to Mr. Neil's and I suppose that is why I forgot."

But during the twenty minutes, more or less,—though probably not less,—that they stood at the outer door, Thornwood was doing most of the talking, the umbrella was forgotten, and another trip became necessary. There is indeed much room to suspect that why Thornwood did so much talking just then was to throw the umbrella off his mind and also cause Emma to forget about it.

On his next visit, Grace was so unmindful of the eternal fitness of things as to bring Thornwood his piece of property. Yet very soon afterward Mr. Neil

sent his hired man to the Brandon house on an errand. It was near the middle of the day, and Emma came from the kitchen in response to his knock. The sitting-room was in its usual orderly condition. Emma was a neat housekeeper as well as an industrious one, and Thornwood had been quick to perceive this fact.

The young man would have preferred doing his errand at the close of the day, but Emma was equal to the occasion.

"Why, you are not going to rush off now, I hope," exclaimed the girl as Thornwood was showing signs of reluctant leavetaking. "Stay to dinner. You have never done so yet."

"Mr. Neil will be looking for me," objected the young man.

But his objection was mildly expressed and he did not believe much in it anyway. Neither did he care particularly.

"That won't make any difference to him in a year from now," returned Emma. "He's too good-natured to kick about it. I've got a lot of raspberries that I don't want to let spoil. They're both kinds; black caps and red ones."

"Then," said the guest, "I will stay and help take care of them. It will give me some chance to see what sort of cook you are."

"O, I reckon you will find a better one."

What did the girl mean? or did she mean anything in particular?

"Now come on," said the housekeeper as she came into the sitting-room at the end of a half hour. "O, I see you are studying a fashion plate. That's a good idea," she added with a roguish laugh.

Thornwood knew very well, in spite of his previous lack of acquaintance with the culinary department of the house, that the dinner to which he was invited was not an ordinary one. A woman of tact knows that a man is readily pleased through his stomach, but on the other hand, the man is quick to draw a favorable impression from a table that is well spread on his account.

"I just thought I'd feed you on some scraps," remarked Emma.

But if the dinner had really been of scraps, Thornwood might have gained an unfavorable inference as to the favor with which he was regarded by Emma Brandon.

He was no longer in doubt as to whether his society was welcome, and his visits to the Brandon home became frequent.

"Did you get all the wheat cut to-day?" inquired Mrs. Neil one July evening.

"Yes," replied her husband, "the whole field is cut and shocked. Fifty-five dozen."

"Then I'll have to ask you and James to lay off work to-morrow and go pick blackberries. There's a powerful sight over on the Truman place, and no one here to get any but you men. If I was to go, you'd come short on your meals and then I'm too afraid of snakes. There was a copperhead killed in a stone heap over there yesterday."

Directly after breakfast the two men sallied forth, each carrying in either hand some sort of receptacle for fruit. The "Truman place," now used only as pasture and fast going back to a timbered condition, was not far away. A change of ownership had thrown it into the possession of a man who had a

farm of his own and a much better house. The interior fences had rotted down and the few surviving apple trees yielded an inferior quality of fruit. At the 'bottom of a deep ravine and in nearness to a spring, was a one-room log house, its doors and windows missing, its gables leaning, and its roof sagging in the middle. All over the tract were blackberry briars in masses of varying extent and well laden with fruit in all stages of maturity.

Thornwood and his employer soon drifted out of speaking distance from one another. Perhaps this was not quite unintentional on the part of the younger man. There were several groups of berry-pickers in the field and a little distance away were Emma and her sisters. Girls concentrate at such times, while men diverge. Whether Thornwood felt lonely, or whether he thought the berries more plentiful where the girls were, we do not assume to say. But at all events, he contrived to make rather speedy progress in their direction. It is also worthy of notice that he moved nearer to Emma than to her companions.

"O my," exclaimed Emma. "Don't you wish blackberries had no thorns? I have to leave some of the best ones because I can't get to them withont tearing my dress, and I'll have to use my needle and thread on it anyway after I get home. If the ragman was to come round, I'd have to hide from him."

"Here's a nice lot that I don't think you can reach very easily," remarked Thornwood. "Let me break down these old vines next to them."

"You oughtn't to do that, or you'll never get your own bucket full. And then I see you eat every other one. Mr. Neil will be docking your wages. I like to get berries better this way than to go off in a

wagon for them. They get so mashed up. We girls picked thirteen gallons here yesterday."

"Then you can afford to only go around the edges," observed the young man.

"They've put me on to lead the League next Sunday night," said Emma, changing the conversation. "You'll get up a talk for me or have a piece to read, won't you?"

"Yes, I'll come to the rescue. I'm not much at speaking in public, but I can think of a good piece I might read."

"Why don't you come up in the choir and sing? I've noticed you turn two persons off that's asked you. You are not that bashful, I hope?"

"O no," protested Thornwood. "But I never sang in a choir."

"That needn't make any difference. Anybody that can sing is needed. We don't stand on ceremony out here."

"But nearly everybody does sing and all can't be in the choir. Well, perhaps I shall join you after a bit. How the summer is going! My term with Mr. Neil will soon be out."

"You'll be back here to teach this winter, won't you?" asked Emma quickly, as she glanced sidewise at her companion.

"Yes, I expect to be, but that is more than three months ahead and there's all this time to fill in somehow."

"Couldn't you work for Erv Custer or someone else till your term opens?"

Thornwood did not for a moment reply. He was trying to make out what the girl meant. Did she really care enough for him to wish he might remain

in the neighborhood? Or was it nothing more than mere friendly interest?

"Perhaps so," he replied. "I shall make some inquiry."

"I hope you'll succeed."

There it was again.

After a slight pause she continued: "No one thinks that boy who worked for Neil is coming back. He got restless and wanted a change. He'll most likely stay away as long as he's doing anything. There would be a fine chance for you to make your board."

"Perhaps, then," observed Thornwood, "the boy will be thoughtful enough of me to stay where he is."

"Aren't you glad I'll not be one of your scholars?" pursued Emma.

"Why?" asked the young man, looking around to see if the other girls were near enough to overhear.

"Because I used to get into trouble when I went to school."

"Perhaps your teachers were not partial to you."

"I don't know how that was, but if I got into mischief I would always be found out, and then I had to stand on the floor."

"I guess that was the teacher's fault. But did you ever keep school?"

"Yes, once. I was a girl then like my sisters over there. I had no trouble, but I reckon the scholars had an easy time."

The Epworth League was well attended by the younger element of the community, and by several of those who were not so young. Whether the prime object that drew the young people there, was a hearty concurrence in the ostensible objects of the League,

or whether it was a craving for some place they might attend, was a question about which there could be little dispute. But even if the higher motive were not always the ruling one, it is too much to assume that the gatherings were in vain.

As with the church services, so with the League. There was loitering after the dismissal, but it was now at the inner doors rather than the outer. Yet this was not always because the young men and older boys were waiting for a chance to display their gallantry. It was most usual for the young ladies and the girls to come in small groups and retire in the same manner.

"Looking for the girl you want to go home with?" inquired Allen Treff, a short, stout man, who had a habit of getting quite close to a person and batting his eyes.

"Who knows?" was Thornwood's non-committal reply.

He had rather made up his mind this evening to offer himself as Emma's escort. But yielding to the annoyance set in motion by Treff's inquiry, and concluding to fall back to his former resolution, he saw her pass out in company with two young ladies of her own age.

## VIII

### The Teachers' Institute

> Poetry is the light of life; life should be poetry put in action.—*Lubbock.*

Kingwood is not very compactly built. The site is elevated though not very uneven. Shade trees are numerous, the paint brush is often used, and the houses and yards are generally kept in good order. The court-house occupies a central position, and lies at one side of a square, grass-covered lot. A foot-wall of hewn stone, fashioned like a coping, marks off the uninclosed portion of the square, while on the fourth side is a long building, constructed in sections and of different materials, painted in different colors, and suggestive of a spy-glass drawn out to its full length. At the time of our sketch, it was occupied by a store, a bank, several law offices, and the central telephone office. It was known as the Magaw building.

The court-house itself is a brick structure of two stories, and is very plain in appearance both within and without. A small porch shelters the front entrance, and this is joined by a brick path to a broad sidewalk, likewise of brick. Between the court-house and the Magaw building is a narrow passage-way, much used, and through which is a draft of air whenever there is the least general breeze. On the other side of the court-house was then a graveled walk, forming a short cut between the two business centers of the town.

THE TOWN OF KINGWOOD

Phot'd by C. S. Rexroad

Ordinarily, the court-house and its grounds look quiet enough. Once in a while a county official, a lawyer, or the janitor may be seen at the front entrance, and rather less often a visitor from the rural districts or from another village.

The August morning was overcast and a drizzly rain was falling. The few men around the court-house door drew underneath the porch. The group was made up of three or four townspeople and a half dozen male teachers. The acquaintance existing among the latter was limited, or else they did not feel in a chatty mood. At all events they stood idly by, holding their hands in their pockets. One of them was glancing over the legal notices posted on either side of the entrance. Now and then a later arrival would pass over the diagonal path, generally exchanging salutations with members of the group.

On the stone facing of the porch stood Dr. Pellam, his hands in his pockets and a broad smile resting on his features. A short, stout man was approaching him.

"Hello, Doc." he exclaimed. "I see that Irish grin on your face. How are you, anyway?"

"Fine as silk, Tolby."

"The same crackerjack?"

"The same one. And have you come over from Terra Alta to look for trouble?"

"Trouble? How can a man get into trouble in this dry old town?"

"Just cut loose and try 'er on. We'll lay you out every whipstitch. The lockup is on this street and we keep it ready for such heathen as you."

"How big some people can talk," replied Tolby. "What in the mischief would you fellows do if it

wasn't for court and one or two other affairs that come around about once every fly time? We let you have the institute this year just to keep you from getting totally discouraged. You have the dullest old shell of a town one can find in a month's drive. You can't even hear a railroad whistle except when the wind is favoring. Where would you come out at, if we fellows from the other side of the river didn't come over here and trim you up once in a while?"

"Now you remember our bargain," said the doctor, "I was to shave off my mustache if you would quit telling yarns for three months."

"Have to tell yarns over here to keep from feeling dead."

"Pshaw, you can't see straight. No stale, musty, second-hand jokes from you Terra Alta fellows. Suppose I would live in that one-horse town of yours, all chugged in among the hills? just to see a few plow joggers jolt in over your bumpy roads and have to windlass themselves up to get from one street into the next? And when you see half a dozen old broken-down wagons blocking your street, you say business is lively. Why, the snowdrifts lay on your hills over there till the middle of June. Well, the rain's let up. The teachers are coming in a little faster now. There's Bolen and his daughter. Reckon the old man has business in town or he wouldn't have come twenty miles himself. And there's a wagon-load going through to the upper end of the street. Two Dunkard bonnets in the crowd. They're from the east side. But—well, well, if there isn't Dan Wallace down there on the corner by Jack D.'s store. I saw him coming up street a little bit

ago and I thought he looked familiar like. Haven't seen him here for years. They say the first time he was in this place, he came trudging up the middie of Pine street, staring around like some mountaineer from way back. He put his head in at the drug store and asked if this was Morgantown. And then dogged if he didn't ask what time the boat would leave. No river within three miles and then only navigable for catfish. Then he went on and spelled out the letters on Crown's sign—C-r-o-w-n. He made it Crone. Done it all for a sort of prank. He and Mayrick, that chum of his, were fond of their jokes. Eccentric fellow, that Dan Wallace is. He is very deceiving in appearance. He is shrewd and wonderfully well posted. He has been round a good bit and seen lots of people. But who's that chap he's been talking with the last five minutes? Must be a teacher. You can tell them by their everlasting gripsacks."

"I know," said one of the teachers in the group. "His name is Thornwood. Been working for Hosea Neil out by Gladetown. They say he's going to teach the Gladetown school."

"Then I've heard tell of him. Why, how are you Wallace?" exclaimed the doctor, as the object of his remarks drew near the group at the door. "Quite a stranger here. Going to teach in Preston again?"

"Yes, and then I thought I'd see what you people look like by this time."

"We'll do all right, except we may need a little straightening out."

"Beginning with Dr. Pellam?"

"Certainly," was the laughing response.

"Doctor, who is running institute matters for the

town? Mr. Thornwood and myself don't know yet where we are to put up."

"Better go look up Jeff Green. You'll find him in his office, I think. Went down not ten minutes ago. He's on the citizens' committee and has the run of where the teachers are to be quartered better than anyone else."

"Institute won't begin till after dinner, will it?" next inquired Wallace.

"No, too late now. It's after eleven," said the teacher already mentioned.

"Well, Mr. Thornwood," said Wallace, "let's go and see where we can put our bundles. Then we'll rest up a while."

"Say, Wallace," said the doctor. "You can take the boat for Morgantown right down here in Green's Run. Don't have to go but a little piece. We have the ditch all dug out. Boat whistles at one o'clock."

The group laughed at the doctor's sally.

"All right, doctor. He who laughs last laughs best," replied Wallace, as he moved away. Then, turning to Thornwood a moment later, he continued: "I am not annoying anyone who lets me alone. Don't you say anything, Thornwood, but you watch now, and see if Dr. Pellam don't get paid off for his joke at my expense. You keep a lookout at the close of the institute, or just afterwards."

Jeff Green was found in his office. He sported a long, dark mustache and wore a black, broad-brimmed hat. He was a busy person and his activity was varied, yet he always seemed able to find time to chat with a caller.

"Why, how are you, Wallace?", was Green's

hearty salutation. "Where did you drop from? Are you in search of a new stock of truth?"

"No, not in this office. Wrong place to find it. Are you acquainted with Mr. Thornwood? Mr. Thornwood, this is Mr. Green, an old friend of mine."

"Glad to meet you, sir," replied Green, shaking hands with the other caller. "Take seats."

Mr. Green now dropped into his office chair, whirled it about so as to face his callers, and then tipped back and crossed his legs. These were signs that he was ready for a chat.

"What barrack or coal-shed are you going to quarter us in?" inquired Wallace.

"Unfortunately, all the barns, coal-sheds, and empty piano boxes are already engaged. We secured the orneriest one for you as long as we could, but we have places for you down at the Kenton. They'll be right full up down there—two beds in some rooms—but that's the way it goes when we invoice such a cargo of hoboes as the town is afflicted with this week. George Reger and a fellow named Maurer will be your roommates. Reckon you know them. They are from down your way."

"O yes, I know them well. They are quiet, civil fellows."

"This is midsummer, you know," pursued Green. "So you won't need to be in the room much, if any, except at night. Institute is sort of a new thing with us. First time we've had it for several years. Why, here is Mr. Whitley, our county superintendent. Mr. Whitley, you know Mr. Wallace, don't you?"

"O yes, indeed, we have met," replied the caller, who was a young man with a black mustache.

"Then let me make you acquainted with Mr. Thornwood, a new man amongst us. Mr. Thornwood is to teach out at Gladetown."

"Glad to meet you, sir," said the superintendent with a pleased look. "I hear that you are putting in the summer at Mr. Hosea Neil's. I am very well acquainted with him. I went to school at Gladetown before I began teaching."

Wallace and his companion soon left the office, going to their hotel, which stood near the foot of a slope, and was one of the oldest houses in the place. Their room proved to be a small, low chamber, with very low windows. The floor space was nearly taken up with the two beds, the washstand and some chairs.

"Rather close quarters," remarked Wallace. "But then it is only for a few days. It is a little wet just now and we may as well take our ease till the dinner bell rings."

Wallace was much the older of the two. He wore a dark mustache, and his thick, black hair was worn a little low upon his forehead. There was an earnest, searching look in his gray eyes, and during the half hour of their acquaintance, Thornwood was aware that his companion had been studying him. The elder man was very plainly clothed, and instead of a valise he carried a package.

They had been talking some minutes, chiefly about Gladetown, when the door suddenly opened and two young men rushed into the room. Both were spare of form. The younger, who was also the shorter of the two, was not yet out of his teens. He had sharply marked features, large eyes, and his

straight hair was combed down over the sides of his brow. He was evidently the more vivacious of the two and the expression on his face was alert and intellectual.

"Why, how do you do, Mr. Wallace," he exclaimed. "Don't see how we missed you on the road. Come in on foot?"

"Yes, certainly, as I cannot stand it to ride a horse. Mr. Thornwood, let me introduce you to our roommates. This young gentleman is Mr. George Reger and this other is Mr. Earl Maurer. Mr. Thornwood is a newcomer amongst us and is going to teach at Gladetown."

The new arrivals shook hands with Thornwood very cordially.

"This comes very near being a Grant district crowd," remarked Reger. "Three out of the four."

"I think you will have to count me in too," observed Thornwood. "I am a native of Grant, though I was too young to remember when my folks left there."

"Then we may get you over with us yet," replied Reger. "I'd be glad for you to come down to Grant and see what we look like. I might show your old home to you."

"What would old Preston do if it wasn't for Grant district," remarked Maurer. "It is the balance wheel that keeps the whole state in running order."

"Razzle, dazzle, there goes the dinner-bell and I haven't got my hair brushed," said Reger plunging his hands into the wash-bowl.

"Some of us may have to eat at second table," suggested Wallace.

The ringing of the court-house bell was the signal

for a general concentration hither of the persons attending the institute. The sky had partially cleared, and in front of the court-house was a considerable number of the male attendants, generally in small groups, each carrying on its independent conversation. Yet it was the few who did the talking, the majority being listeners. Up the passage-way, through the midst of the crowd, came the female members. They were usually by themselves and in groups of threes and fours, the male acquaintances whom they passed raising their hats in recognition, but generally after the person saluted had passed by.

"Second bell. Give her another jerk. Boys, let's go up and see the show begin," said Eli Batten, one of the exceedingly few middle-aged men in the throng.

The crowd swarmed up the twin stairways and entered the court-room, an apartment little more than large enough to accommodate the members of the institute alone. It was carpeted with matting and was a rather bright, cheery room. Inside the rail in front of the judge's seat were the superintendent, the two instructors, and a few other persons. The long tables around which they stood were covered with small piles of papers and circulars, some of which had been placed there by the agents of publishing houses and of educational institutions. The benches near the wall on each side of the entrance were largely occupied by outsiders who came in to witness the proceedings.

Thornwood became separated from Wallace, and taking a front seat near a window he fell into conversation with a teacher whose name he found to be Holley. Their low talk helped to swell the hum that rose from all parts of the room.

"In a little while," said Holley, "the two instructors imported for the occasion will say their pieces. It is the introduction talks that I mean. Now you watch and see if I don't come tolerable close to what you will hear. They will tell us what a pretty town this is, what good reports they heard of it, what a well-dressed and intelligent looking audience this is, how glad they were to come, and what a good institute we shall have; and when they come to leave, they will tell us it is the best one they ever knew. Their adjectives will all be superlatives. Other institutes won't be in it compared with ours—not till they get somewhere else and ladle out the same kind of taffy to another crowd. Then they will throw in some wonderful experiences of their own, or supposed to be their own by those who don't know better. They will act as though we were a crowd of school kids, and they will put on an air of patronizing condescension. About all we are to do is to listen to their wordy talks, and they expect us to swallow all they say, like a nestful of unfledged birds swallow the worms brought to them. Why, the men sent here don't always know more than some of us. Two of the crowd have been through the state university; several through the state normal, and a dozen or fifteen hold state certificates. We are not all a pack of log schoolhouse graduates. There'll be over two hundred of us when they all get in. A good many I don't know. That well-dressed man with a silk hat is Holman, principal of the town school. Those two ladies near where he stands are the Coplin sisters from near here. That fellow with a linen coat who has gone into those side seats back of the organ is Bird, one of the examiners. He's a fine penman.

Then I can see Freeman from Portland district. He's an old standby. That man with him is a boon companion. It is Perkins from Pleasant. There are two Perkinses from there—James E. and James O. There's the Hilt sisters from Union coming in together. You know teaching is contagious in some families. There's several Temples from Union district, and there's four Starr sisters that belong here in town. Then there's Darby from Lyon, Miss Coeman from Valley—you know her of course—, Crooks from Reno, and Ridley and Gill from Grant. That blonde young lady who will probably play the organ is Miss Hinman from Terra Alta. That auburn-haired girl beyond her is also a musician. She is Miss Spurlock. The one near the end of the forward seat is not a teacher, but she likes to attend institute. She is Miss Green, a sister to Jeff. And there's a man on the same bench who used to teach. He is Ralph Blymer. He's been in the South African diamond fields and they say he's going to Alaska soon. Rap. There she goes. Whitley is calling the thing to order."

"We'll open by singing 'West Virginia Hills,'" announced the superintendent.

A choir had gathered about the instrument, but singing was general among the audience, and the apartment began to resound with the patriotic hymn of the Mountain State:

O the West Virginia hills,
  How majestic and how grand,
With their summits bathed in glory,
  Like our Prince Immanuel's land.
Is it any wonder then,
  That my heart with rapture thrills,
As I stand once more with loved ones,

On those West Virginia hills?

CHORUS:

O the hills, beautiful hills,
How I love those West Virginia hills.
If o'er land or sea I roam, still I think of happy home,
And the friends among the West Virginia hills.

A few moments later, enrollment blanks were circulated, and the teachers began at once to make the necessary entries.

"How'll this do for an answer," whispered Holley.

Thornwood ran his eye down the sheet, and under the question, "What educational works have you read during the year?" he found this response: "Mother Goose, Jepson's Horse Doctor, Backsetter's Almanac."

When the instructors had concluded their opening remarks, Holley nudged his companion significantly.

"You see I wasn't far out of the way," he whispered.

"I appoint Miss Ella Queen and Mr. Clarence Holley as secretaries," announced Mr. Whitley.

"Whew! I'm in for a job," whistled Holley.

"Get up there," whispered several of his friends.

Holley went into the corner fenced off for the use of the clerk of the court. He was joined by his associate, the possessor of a pair of eyeglasses. Wallace had already preceded them and was sitting out of sight from the audience. Oblivious to everything around him, his thoughts were far away, in another section and among a different people.

Recess brought not only a renewal of the buzzing of voices, but a general exit from the room.

"A little tiresome to one that's been at work all

summer," remarked a stocky-built, fair-faced young man of the name of Cole. "It would be a slim crowd if the law didn't compel us to come. We ought to have pay for it. We have to drop our other work right in the busy season, and stay here most a week at our own expense. Then attend a summer normal every year, and an examination every other year, and it makes a hole in your salary."

"One needs to get hold of a Number One as soon as he can," replied a member named Ridley. "That runs four years and can be renewed. Then you get better pay and can drop these summer normals."

"Yes, but lots of us has to take Twos and Threes till them examiners gets tired of turning us down," grumbled another speaker. "I have saw fellows get Ones that ain't been to school no more'n I have."

"That's your own fault," exclaimed Ridley. "You've got to improve. Goodness alive, boy, the idea of a green kid like you, that's only taught one term, grumbling because he don't have a One. I began with a Three and got only twenty dollars a month. If I hadn't pushed on and got a One, I'd have lost hundreds of dollars by this time. I have a state certificate now, and that runs a good long while."

"And there's the social side," put in Maurer. "It's worth something to turn out every year and see one another and keep in touch. It makes a right pleasant little outing."

"Especially if you are a lady's man like George Reger there and some other fellows," threw in Cole. "We can learn a good bit at these institutes, if we only choose to. We teachers don't put heart enough in our work. We don't get near enough together."

By tacit consent the group began listening to the

by-play going on between a teacher with a spreading red mustache and a shorter man with dark, wavy hair and a smooth face.

"If I wanted to be well thought of," said the owner of the red mustache, in a very deliberate tone, "I'd get Lee Musgrave to talk against me. People know him so well that they could tell I was the very opposite of what he tried to make me out to be."

"And if I," rejoined Musgrave, "were to choose a person whose words were entitled to no consideration whatever, I couldn't think of any one so quick as O'Gorman. Why, down there at the camp-ground, I had to take him away from the crowd and keep him with me, so he would not bring discredit on the meeting."

"It was for your own good I consented to go," explained O'Gorman. "The meeting was all right without me, and I know if you were in the crowd, you would be exhibiting your evil ways and neutralizing all the good they were trying to do."

"As if there could be anything uplifting in such a hopelessly depraved person as O'Gorman," scoffed Musgrave.

"Just let a slip noose be put around your neck and the rope be thrown over a good, strong limb, and give me a chance to yank the other end; then how about the uplift?"

"Ireland's ahead," shouted several of the listeners.

"Going up to-night?" inquired Holley of Wallace at the supper table. "The citizens of the town give us a reception in the court-room. There'll be speeches, ice cream and sociability."

"And so many people in the room that you can hardly squeeze about," demurred Wallace. "No,

I'll stay here and not get sweltered. What's on the program for the other nights?"

"A lecture by Capt. Brilliant Wednesday night. Tickets, thirty-five cents, reserved seats, fifty."

"The room won't be jammed that night," interjected Wallace. "Not half the teachers will be there."

"And literary exercises Tuesday and Thursday nights," resumed Holley. "By the way, the program committee want you to give a talk. It's mighty hard to find enough volunteers. It wouldn't be that way if all were like George Reger over there. He comes to institute loaded. We'll catch the girls by offering prize contests in recitations."

"Agreed," replied Wallace. "I'll respond and do my part."

Very few of the teachers stayed away from the reception. Even a threatening cloud had little effect. In the best apparel at their command, the members of the institute poured into the court-room and were joined by so liberal a contingent of the townspeople that the seating capacity of the hall was overtaxed. The busy hum of several hundred voices drowned the early mutterings of the approaching storm.

"Mr. Callahan, of the Kingwood bar, will give the address of welcome on behalf of the town," announced the superintendent.

As this moment a thunderpeal was distinctly heard.

"Ladies and gentlemen," began Mr. Callahan, "I did not know I would be greeted with thunderous applause even before I had begun speaking. But perhaps it is better that applause should precede a speaker; there may be none to follow. Teachers of Preston county, after you have been away from us

for several years, we welcome you to our hearts and homes, our firesides and our tables; breakfast tables, dinner tables, supper tables, and parlor tables. Our streets are not so well lighted as they soon will be, but to make amends for that, the full moon is on our side and will shed her silvery beams upon us by night. The weather bureau, too, has been mindful of our needs, and it has sent us the approaching shower to purify and cool the air and lay the dust. You will find in our beautiful town the most ample and well shaded sidewalks for your promenades. We are supposed to have but one court-room in the town, but you may turn all our parlors into court rooms. We will feed you to the best of our ability, and you may eat all you please—provided you pay for it. It is a little warm to-night, but we have been mindful of that. And to heighten the social atmosphere, while lowering the physical temperature, the ladies of the town will serve you presently with cake and ice cream. Eat and be filled; without money and without price. And more than this, the railroad which comes to our city will give you on Thursday afternoon a free excursion to Mountain View, where you may gaze from the observatory, picnic among the rocks, talk to your lady loves, and in after years gaze back with fond recollection to that spot as the place where the foundations of your deepest and most enduring attachments were laid. Ladies and gentlemen, we welcome you to our town. Come back and be made welcome another year."

The response on behalf of the institute was by George Reger, who in graceful and flowery language sketched a eulogy of education and educational aspirations.

Mr. Green then appeared on the rostrum.

"Ladies and gentlemen," said he, "we have thus far to-night appealed to the head—the intellect. We shall now appeal to the stomach, and we shall supply you with an article which in color at least will remind you of the riches of the Klondike. As many as can will please come inside the rail and fill the space there. The ladies will then wait upon you, and after you have emptied your dishes and become frozen, you will kindly give place to others. Let everyone be patient. We have enough for all, and all shall be waited upon."

"There," poutingly exclaimed Lona Wertz to her cousin Rose. "There's the second batch gone up and we are crowded out. We are well forward, too. How some folks will make a dish of ice cream hold out."

Just then one of the waiters whisked by on her way to the jury room, where the ice cream was kept. She was a resident teacher and wore eye glasses.

"They say a patient waiter is no loser," replied Rose.

The next morning, as Wallace and Thornwood were entering the court-room after an absence, the former was touched on the arm.

"They want you in the jury room," said a voice. "The resolutions committee is in there and wants to talk with you."

"You come on," said Wallace to his companion. "Where I go, I reckon you can."

Thornwood accordingly entered the jury room and remained standing near the door, while Wallace went forward to a table around which were seated six teachers, equally divided as to sex.

Presently a whizzing sound was heard. A missile

came flying in at a window, causing a dull sound as it struck the wall and a sharper report as it glanced upon the stove.

"O land, what's that?" exclaimed one of the lady members.

"Mercy," screamed another rising from her chair.

"What smarty is up to that trick, I wonder?" said the chairman in a tone of annoyance.

In another moment the committee were moving toward the windows like a swarm of bees. They looked in every possible direction, but Wallace remained at the table scanning a sheet of paper.

"Everybody looks wonderful innocent down there," remarked one of the girls.

"It couldn't have been tossed from the ground," declared the chairman. That building yonder is too close."

"How would it do to look at the upper windows over the way?" suggested Wallace with an amused expression. "Some one fired in here with a bean-shooter to wake you folks up."

"Came from the telephone office," declared another of the female teachers. "The hello girl is grinning at us. There's some trifling fellow in there."

When Wallace and Thornwood had returned to the court-room and were finding seats, one of of the instructors was concluding an earnest request that the teachers should refrain from tardiness at the opening of the sessions. As he sat down, Eli Batten sprang to his feet.

"If we are promptly on time," inquired Batten, "will you let us out promptly on time?"

A roar of laughter greeted this interrogation. The

clock in the court-room showed that it was almost ten minutes past the time for dismissal.

"I'll admit that you have the laugh on me this time," acknowledged the discomfited instructor.

Shortly after sunset Thornwood and his new friend returned to the court-house square. In the intersection of the streets at the nearest corner, the town band was playing some selections as a prelude to the entertainment in the court-room. Many of the male attendants at the institute were squatting or lying on the grass inside the grounds. Some were standing about in groups, while others were sitting on the foot-wall which formed a border to the sidewalk. Still others were promenading with their lady friends, although some of the female teachers were pacing the sidewalk by themselves. Two of these groups, walking in opposite direetions, suddenly stopped and began a colloquy.

"'Deed I didn't. O land! They made that up and told it."

"That so? Come on, we're only going down the street."

"We'll go down directly."

"Don't go that way. O goodness! Ah, hoogh."

"Magpies," laughed Wallace.

"They seem to have found some te-hee eggs in a haw-haw's nest," suggested Thornwood.

Then then passed two of the younger girl members, one of whom was humming this improvised parody:

"Mary had a little lamb,
Black as a rubber shoe,
And whenever Mary wept,
That lamb would blubber too."

Crossing the street they passed a colored man, one of the exceedingly small handful of Afro-Americans that live in Preston county. He saluted them with a low bow and an unctuous smile, the legacy of training received in servitude. They next met a miner, who, in making his evening toilet, had not washed off the coal dust from his eyelids.

Continuing their stroll around the square, they came to an ice cream parlor and heard the sound of voices within. At Thornwood's instance, they stopped to patronize the institution.

On Thursday morning both the newspapers of Kingwood had been put in the mail. During the morning intermission a dozen copies were being scrutinized by the teachers standing in the yard. They were looking for the printed reports of the institute.

"Hello, boys," said a teacher who answered to the name of Grayhair, although his hair was anything but gray. "Say, here's a lot of fake examination questions."

Several persons crowded around him and read the following article:

"This morning as we go to press, we found a slip containing some of the questions to be used at the examination next week. One of the examiners dropped it in the fifth story of the court-house and our office devil picked it up. We reprint it below for the general benefit.

1. Divide 23456175809538042 by 326745571O254, using short division.

2. Who is the author of the following couplet, and what sort of paper did he write it on?

The boy stood on the burning deck,
Eating potatoes by the peck.

3. Spell the names of the following great men and tell what sort of gum they chewed when they were boys :

Oronhyatekha
Karageorgovitch
Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy
Borrioboola Gha

4. How many buttons were on Putnam's coat at Bunker Hill? Also state if there were any flies on him.

5. If rabbits are eight cents each in Cranesville, and huckleberries are ten cents a gallon on Cheat Mountain, what is the price of curling-irons in Kingwood?"

"Gee whiz!" exclaimed Grayhair. "Look at that arithmetic example. Isn't that a corker?"

"And those names come near being jaw-breakers," remarked an ex-teacher who was a middle-aged man and walked with a limp.

"I wonder who got up all those foolish questions?" asked Grayhair.

"Reckon it's the fellow who signs himself Rye-straw," said one of the bystanders, indicating a man in a faded coat and sun-scorched straw hat, who was passing around the corner of the Magaw building.

In the afternoon came the free excursion on the little railroad connecting Kingwood with the outer world. It was a ride of seven miles over a crooked track with heavy grades, the male element having to stand up in two coal cars, a muslin drapery around the sides of the cars keeping off the coal dust from

their clothes, but not keeping off the cinders continually dropping upon them. But in a social point of view, the excursion was more successful than the crowded reception.

At night were the closing literary exercises of the institute. "Ryestraw" now appeared in another guise than that of the humorist. We quote a portion of his essay on "Our Past, Present, and Future."

The America of yesterday was a rural America. It was dominated by the farm. The dictum that "God made the country but man made the farm," was held as almost an axiom. But owing to the transformation wrought by industrial invention and scienentific inquiry, the relations between country and town are undergoing a profound readjustment.

The America of to-day is civilian in its cast. It is the town which sets the pace for the entire country. This new tendency is still at work. It appears destined to go on until country and town shall have been brought into a closeness of touch that would not have seemed possible a few decades ago. The marked contrast which used to exist between town life and rural life is being more and more softened down. The city can scarcely be ruralized, but the country seems destined to be in a large degree urbanized.

The old-time city was small in extent, but closely built up. The city of the present day is incomparably more populous that the city of the past, although many of those people who do business in the city have now found it convenient to live miles away from their work and amid country surroundings.

The agricultural industry of our land is in a state

of transition. This change is advancing with unequal step. In one region it is marked, while in another it is scarcely yet observable. But the secluded farm, a little workshop in itself, seems in a fair way to become as out-of-date as the "little red schoolhouse." Yet if there is to be a passing of the older features in rural life, and if the coming type is to mark a distinct improvement, it is nevertheless the earlier form which has given our land its bone and sinew and made its great cities possible. The better features of our past century, farm-dominated civilization, constitute a heritage worthy of all remembrance. New conditions produce new men. The men of the new century will not be like those of the old, yet they may look with profit into that which mirrors the old.

The new type of American life which is coming to the fore is not like the old type in its modes of thinking and doing. All our people, both old and young, are sensible of this fact, even when they may not be able to give a clear definition of the change. To advance means to go forward, but it does not necessarily mean to go upward. When we advance we take up something new, but we also leave something behind. Let us then have a care in this revolutionizing of American life, that we do not leave behind too much of that which we can ill afford to lose. Let us have a care that the quality of American manhood and womanhood is not impaired. These lines of Pope are as true to-day as they were true when the poet penned them two hundred years ago:

> "Be not the last by whom the new is tried,
> Nor yet the first to lay the old aside."

We live in Appalachian America. It is an em-

pire in extent. It reaches from the meadows of the Mohawk to the cotton-fields of the Alabama; from the plains where Grant and Lee contended to the banks of the beautiful Ohio and the "dark and bloody ground" of the Kentucky. And not only is Appalachian America as large as sunny France, but it is even more an empire in the far greater variety and richness of its developing resources.

Circumstances have caused this favored land to lag behind in the march of what is commonly termed progress. Yet no other equal part of the Union is inhabited by a more purely American stock, or is characterized in a higher degree by a survival of the freedom and spontaneity of the old-time country life. In the labyrinthine vales of this mountain land the sense of local attachment and local patriotism is felt in all its power. The charm of romance lingers in these secluded glens. Away from the great centers of population with their intense life and their industrial turmoil, we find here an existence bordering on the idyllic in its simplicity and restfulness. The poetic side of life is not extinguished. Tradition, folk-lore, and imaginative tales have not lost their fascination or their sway.

Slowly, indeed, yet it would seem surely, the industrial spirit of the day is making itself felt in even the most backward regions of Appalachian America. The exploitation of our natural resources is laying its impress on the habits and characteristics of our people We, the denizens of this mountain land, are living in a time of transition. West Virginia has long been a secluded commonwealth. It is now being drawn into the busy whirl of industrial developement, and is rising to a higher place in the sis-

terhood of states. Within the lifetime of men now living, these upland valleys will become a new world in contrast with the conditions which have hitherto obtained.

Now is the opportunity of the home author. The old day is passing, yet it is not gone. The materials upon which he may draw, both as to the past and the present, are by no means scarce. Our people are patriotic and they are willing to encourage the worthy efforts of the local writer. In this willingness, our teachers should stand foremost. They will thus foster a worthy object of local pride. They will place a new incentive before themselves and their pupils. They will help to arouse literary ambition in still more of our people, and by encouraging good home literature they will pave the way to a more extensive reading of the world's masterpieces.

The brief closing session of the final day arrived. It was signalized by a vote as to whether the next session should be at Kingwood or Terra Alta, and Kingwood won. There was also a distribution of the certified enrollment cards, and the instructors made farewell speeches.

"Got any onions or red pepper?" inquired Holley. "What a farce for men we've seen only four days and don't personally know, to get up such pathetic leave-takings. But didn't the girls vote strong for Terra Alta? If all had depended on their votes it would have been a close shave for Kingwood."

Handshakes were again in evidence among the teachers. Valises and hand parcels once more appeared. Yet a very large contingent remained to

attend the examination. Among these were Reger and Maurer, Thornwood's roommates.

It was while the institute members were still numerous about the court-house front that a boy gave Dr. Pellam the following note :

Dear Doctor,

Please be in your office at 4:30 to tell me about the Pebble Hill school. I don't like to put you to any trouble. but the matter is important to both of us.

W. J. J. SPELTON.

"What in time does he send me this note for?" muttered the doctor. "Big lot of formality I should say. Why couldn't he drop in himself? W. J. J? Don't know such a Spelton. Some young chap likely. Well, I have no cases now and I'll be in the office. But I don't see what concern I have in the Pebble Hill school."

Dr. Pellam was reading a newspaper at the appointed time when an elderly gentleman appeared at the open door. He wore a full gray beard and his eyes were shaded by colored glasses. He walked slowly and with the aid of a long staff.

"Good day, doctor," was his greeting. "Can you recommend Josiah Lump for the Black Run school? I have a note from him and he refers me to you. I don't know him from Adam myself."

"And I don't know him from Methuselah. Dogged if I can recommend a chap I don't know. Don't know any Lumps in this county except sugar lumps."

"That's all, I guess. Qneer piece of business I should say."

"Very."

No sooner had the caller left than another one appeared. He was a professional man of somewhat portly figure and a large, smoothly shaven face.

"Ah—Doc, I have a note saying three young men from Grafton will be here for examination, and they ask me to see if you can keep them."

" 'Pon my word I can't do it, Gay. I'm full up now. Haven't room enough tor a one-legged flea. Send 'em down to the Kenton or else tell 'em to go to thunder."

"All right, Doc. They can get in somewhere. Going fishing anyways soon?"

"Yes, next week, Gay."

The doctor tried to resume reading, but two more callers quickly appeared.

"Doc," said one of the latter, "are you acquainted with Miss Flo Spawl's record as a teacher?"

"Don't know any such party."

"Then what in the name of sense does she write to me for?" muttered the disgusted caller as he turned away.

The broad-brimmed hat of Jeff Green still darkened the entrance.

"Doc, I have a note from a Munson suggesting that we send right away to a Major Tallbush out in Bacon county and get him to lecture next Monday night while so many teachers are here. It wouldn't be a bad idea to get some entertainment for the crowd. He'll come for expenses and Munson says you know him."

"Yes, I do know the coon. Why, Jeff, he can't talk any more than a lame calf. He never tried to make a speech. Fact is, he hasn't enough good sense to last him more than one day. He has to warm over what little he has every morning, so as to keep about."

"Then what did that blockhead suggest him for?"

The doctor now craned his head to look through a window.

"Bless me, if there aren't three more men coming in. Dagonned if the whole town won't be here yet. I'll bet a punched nickel everyone has a note. Yes, there's Rev. Howe pulling one out of his pocket."

"Exactly," replied the person indicated. "A note asking you to help get the school on Beverly Hill for John Grouse."

"John Grouse!" exclaimed the doctor. "Why, he's totally illiterate; never went to school; can't write his own name. What an idea! Well, what have you, Corey?"

"I was asked if you think Tom Grice is well enough to undertake a school this winter?"

"Great Cæsar," shouted the doctor, springing to his feet and striding to the door. "Who gave you such a tomfool, idiotic question as that? Why, he was never sick a day that I ever heard. Stout as an ox! Yelling like a screech-owl down at the ball game yesterday—and see here! Five more looking this way! Two school marms in the crowd! I smell a big-sized mouse by this time. Say, where's Dan Wallace?"

"Left town," replied Corey.

"Send a man after him," laughed the doctor. Send half a dozen. We want to see him bad. Can't wait!"

## IX

### The Talk on the River Hill

My mountain home, my mountain home,
Dear are the hills to me;
Where first my childhood loved to roam,
Wild as the summer bee.—*Anon.*

"Well, now," exclaimed George Reger the morning after the close of the examination, "the grand agony is over at last. We have gone through the flint-mill, and in about a week we may expect to see the official envelope containing the all-important document that governs the amount of our salary."

The three tenants of the low chamber were not yet out of bed. They had completed two long days of hard toil, and their eyes had not come open at daybreak.

"The next thing is to get home," remarked Maurer. "I have seventeen miles to go."

"And I have farther than that," said Reger.

"How are you going?" inquired their roommate.

"We may have to walk as far as Lenox," replied Reger. "My brother Martin is to meet us there at noon. Lenox is ten miles from here. I presume we might foot it a piece and then cut loose and perigrinate."

"And then pedestrianate," suggested Maurer.

"And after that we could ambulate a while," continued Reger. "All these things would be a change, you see, and it is the change that rests a person."

"I have the prospect of a ten-mile walk also," observed Thornwood.

Maurer was the first to assume an upright position. After rubbing his hair and eyes for several moments, and giving several tremendous yawns that nearly put his jaw out of place, he rose to his feet, made his toilet, and left the room. A flock of blackbirds were chattering in an apple tree near the window. Sunlight could be seen by looking through the glass, but the room had a westward exposure.

"I became better acquainted with the Grant district delegation than any other," said Thornwood. "In the contest it bore off the most honors. I want to congratulate you again for your taking the prize for the best oration."

"Thank you," responded Reger. "And I wish you had taken a hand in the contest. It would have helped to introduce you more among the teachers. Now you better come over into Grant. We'll take care of you. I don't mean to say anything against Valley, but I'd like for you to see what sort of country we have."

"Believe I'll take a trip over there in the spring and look up my birthplace," observed Thornwood.

"Yes, do. And come to my home while you are about it. It may be you could teach a summer normal at Bruceton. The man that has generally taught there summers will not do so next year, so he tells me. And, Mr. Thornwood, I'd like to hear from you once in a while. I believe I'm not so very slow on a correspondence. I think it's a good plan to exchange ideas with a person at a distance. You have taught and lived in a different state, you know. Breadth is one of the things a person needs to get. That is why I took a course in a correspondence school."

"I should like very much indeed to have letters

from you," replied the man in the other bed. "I have enjoyed your acquaintance very much."

"And I am sure I reciprocate. By the way, that was quite a prank Wallace put up on some of the people here. He is a man with whom everyone is well acquainted, yet of whom no one knows anything. Everybody knows his motive in coming to these mountains was to regain his health, and now that he has accomplished that, no one knows what his object is in remaining. Well, if we don't get out of here right soon, the breakfast bell will be rattling down stairs."

Immediately after breakfast the trio separated.

"I am glad to have met you," said Maurer to Thornwood. "Hope we shall see each other again next year. But if you happen down in our corner at any time, come and see me."

As the new teacher was passing the court-house on his way out of town he was accosted by a man of less than average size. His wavy hair was a genuine black and his complexion was almost swarthy.

"Isn't this the Mr. Thornwood who is to swing the hickory out at Gladetown?" he inquired, taking the newcomer's hand.

"I plead guilty to the charge."

"I thought I was right. Well, my name is Black —Joe Black—and I run the Plaindealer. Some one has been telling me you know how to stick type."

"Only just enough to understand how it is done. I am not proficient."

"Well, it is something to know that much. Could you give me a lift for a few days? I'm short-handed."

"I might do so for the rest of this week if you will 'phone out to Mr. Neil and explain my delay in go-

ing back. I don't need to be there sooner than Monday, anyway."

"All right, then. I'll do that. One of my men is laid up and another one is called away. You come in at just the right time."

Saturday afternoon, while Thornwood had gone out of the office to fill a water pitcher, he encountered David Bruce.

"Why, you are set up in town, are you?" exclaimed the friend.

"Only for a few days. I'm going back to Neil's to-morrow."

"Come ride out with me," urged Bruce. "I came in a buggy and I'm alone. I can't get away very early, and it won't inconvenience me if I was to wait for you. The night won't be dark. And go with me to my house and stop all night."

"Very well, then. I'll be glad of the ride and your company. I'll be ready just as soon as I get out of the office."

It was after twilight when the young men had reached David's home and put away the team.

"Let's go in the front way," said Bruce. "I'll bring out my box of curiosities for you to look at while mother is getting something for us to eat. I see the other folks are out in the yard drying sweet corn. We have a dry-house for that purpose and they want to get through to-night. Like as not, they will be out there till twelve, slicing corn and tending the fire."

While David was gone up the stairway in search of his geological specimens, Thornwood surveyed the titles in a well-filled bookcase. He had already found that even if David Bruce did live in the seclusion of

the river hills, he not only kept well abreast with the news of the day, but he thought on what he read, and as his opinions were leisurely formed they were far from superficial.

The supper table was waited upon by David's mother, a kind-faced, elderly lady, who wore a black dress and a cap. The conversation turned upon the river of the county, a stream which Thornwood had never yet seen.

"It is not easy to get a glimpse of it round here," remarked David. "You generally have to get close up to the break of the river hill. It is hid way down in what is almost a canyon. The water is so extremely clear that you can't tell how deep the holes are by their looks. Then the current is stronger than it looks. That makes it a bad river to ford and that is why the early settlers gave it the name of Cheat. In very dry spells one can sometimes get over on the rocks, but in high water it is a roaring flood. The river has a tremendous fall. To slackwater it, like they have done the Monongahela, it would take a dam every half mile. One summer a party of us went over on the other side for cherries. We took a boat and went over above the mouth of Sandy. The water was high and we were not used to rowing. The boat swirled round and round, and we had a time of it to get over at all. The current of Sandy was so strong it shot half way across the river, and if we had got into that whirl we would have been carried down stream in spite of everything. We barely missed running into the current anyway. Then we went up the river hill and got our cherries, but we didn't find anyone who cared to put us back over the river, high as the water was. We had to go up Sandy to the

bridge at Rockville, and then down the other side to the Beaver Hole. When we were four miles from the Beaver Hole we were told it was seven miles, and it was getting dark already. When we did get to the ferry, there was no way for us to cross, and we had to go a mile below to find a man who would put us over. It was late In the night before we got home. We were bound to get back, for we knew the folks would be uneasy about us."

"I know a piece of worse luck than that," remarked Mrs. Bruce. "I disremember just how long ago it's been, but its nigh onto fifty years. A man and his boy were going from this side over to the Spring Hill furnace. It was about the month of August. There was no house anywhere near the ferry then. The river was high and the boat over on yon side. The man said he would swim over and get it. The boy tried to keep him from it, but he was full of liquor and he would go. He was about half way over when the boy see him go under—or thought he did. It was getting dark by that time. The boy stayed right there all night. There was no road down to the river then—nothing but a path—and he didn't know the place well. And rattlesnakes around —plenty in them days. First thing he did after he see his father go under was to pick up a rock and smash a hole in his father's rum jug that caused the trouble. It made him feel mad to think of it. The boy growed up and let liquor alone hisself. The man was found some piece down the river."

"On the tops of these river hills," remarked David, "there's less fog than you've been used to seeing in the glades. People used to call them the frosty glades and thought they weren't much ac-

count for farming. They are more frosty than the ridges is yet, but are not near so bad since they have been cleared and ditched."

"The seasons is not like they used to be," observed the matron. "When the winter shet down it stayed so. Now, the winters is more open-like. Perhaps it is becaze so much timber has been cut out. Peaches used to be almost a sure crop; there was always plenty in the country. Now, they don't hit very often."

"The pioneer days in this country don't lie so very far back," said David. "The older people like mother remember them well. That was when the country was nine-tenths woods and the other tenth stumps, and the people lived in small log houses. Merchants had to bring their goods from Cumberland by wagon. Churches and schoolhouses all log, like everything else. And plenty of game. Those were primitive times."

"Farmers in them days," remarked Mrs. Bruce, "had to be very saving when they salted their cattle. It cost something, salt did. There was licks on Bull Run where the deer went. Farmers druv their cattle to them places. People used to get along right well after all in them little log cabins, even if they didn't have much. I believe they was healthier then. They had corn bread and not this here patent flour. And living used to be easier. Young men could get land very cheap and build them log houses."

"But there were inconveniences in living in a one-room house," laughed David. "Up in one of the back counties some years ago a preacher stopped at one of them to get to stay all night. He had come a long way and was very tired. But there was only a woman at the house. She said her man

was away and wouldn't be back till in the night. But he was so tired that he begged hard to stay, and at last she told him that he might occupy the spare bed. He said nothing about his being a preacher. She sat up and waited for her man. He come in very late. He was a big grizzled-like fellow, and after he shook the snow off of him he stood before the fire and warmed his hands and feet. Then he went to the other side of the room and talked low with his wife. The preacher thought that meant he was going to kill him. He resolved to be ready to make a spring and grapple him, but knew he wouldn't stand much show, for the man was big and strong. As the man talked with the woman he every once in a while looked toward the bed. The preacher got scared. The man went to the fire again, warmed himself in front and then turned round and thawed out his back. He still looked toward the bed several times. In a little bit, he took out his clasp knife and run his thumb along the edge. Then he come toward the bed and the preacher thought it was all day with him. But the man reached up to a beam, cut some slices of venison and broiled them and ate them with corn bread and milk. Then he got down and prayed. He didn't forget the stranger by any means. He prayed for the poor, wayfaring man who had come there tired and hungry to seek shelter for the night. He hoped God would grant him a safe return, and if he wasn't a saved man he hoped God would touch his heart. The preacher couldn't stand that very long. He jumped up and shouted 'Glory!' "

And so the little company remained for some time at the table talking of reminiscences.

"Let's go out a while," said David after breakfast. "It is bright and sunny and we might walk up into the pasture. This is Sunday and there's no work to do."

The friends walked up a hillside covered with a growth of cinquefoil, and sat in the shade of an apple tree, after picking up the choicest of the windfalls lying underneath. The warm, fresh morning air seemed tonic and life-giving. About the horizon lay the mellow haze which is observable at the close of summer.

"Now we can look right down on the house," remarked Bruce. "The ground is quite level round it, but you don't have to go over a minute's walk on yon side to find yourself right on the edge of a break. It looks like you could toss a stone from there down into the creek. The hill is two hundred and fifty feet high. We can look off a good distance, especially north and south. You wouldn't think we were down in a basin, would you? The hills around us don't look any higher than this one. But if you were over there by Herring or out here by Rohr, you could look right down on this knob. Some of the hills through here are rather steep to cultivate, but they bring good grass. Over there in the north on yon side the river you can see a little of Grant district."

"That is where I was born," added Thornwood. "The farm is a few miles north of Bruceton."

David pointed to the northeast.

"Do you see that white house way yonder on the upper side of a field looking like a white speck? That house is almost as nigh to Bruceton as we are to Gladetown. It lays on a high point, and that's

why we see it from here. And that blue knob in the far distance, shaped like a cock of hay, is Sugarloaf, up by Ohiopyle in Pennsylvania. This broad valley we live in runs way beyond the state line. I should think you would have a curiosity to go over there and take a look at your birthplace."

"I do have the curiosity and I mean to go over the river sometime and visit the spot."

"A few miles beyond the state line," pursued David, "you would come to the National Pike, Fort Necessity, Braddock's grave, and other historic places. Well, by this time you are better acquainted with your new home, or old home, for it seems it is both in one to you. What do you think of it by this time, anyway?"

And the speaker looked toward his companion with an inquiring smile.

"I might answer by saying I don't feel as yet any particular impulse to go away. I can't complain of the treatment I have received and I like the country better than at first."

"It can't be such a bad place to live in when you look the matter over," continued Bruce, as he leaned back on the grass and assumed a meditative posture. "Sometimes our people may be careless in their clothes and their way of keeping house, but then we have our redeeming qualities. I think we produce a pretty good class of American citizens here in these hills. We are a kind, sympathetic, hospitable crowd, American to the core, and about as free from class feeling as you can find people anywhere. The pioneers had to stand together for convenience and protection. The habit has been handed down. So we stand pretty near on an equality. A hired man

or a hired girl is like one of the family, and very often he or she is some relative. When a fellow happens around we feed him; and if it is near night we take him in out of the weather if he is half way decent. When one of our people needs help, he is very likely to get it. We may not be up in the matter of fine manners, as city people understand the term, but a good deal of this city polish is city humbug. We have an inbred courtesy as much as any people has, though we may be awkward sometimes in showing it. Once in a while we may appear a trifle offish toward the stranger, but it don't mean much. It comes from force of habit, just like it does with any class of people that's not much used to seeing strangers. We have our rackets and jealousies among ourselves, like any family does, but there is a general spirit of neighborliness after all. You don't find it so everywhere, particularly in cities. And I fear there will be less of it as this country gets into the swim of industrial life and has public works all over it."

"It is this neighborliness that has won me, more than anything else," remarked Thornwood.

"And then gross crimes are not common here," resumed the farmer. "Some of us are contentious, but there are not ten active lawyers among our twenty thousand people. We go away from home and leave our houses unlocked a good deal of the time. We don't think of leaving one of the family to stand guard and see nothing is stole. There's thieving now and then, but it's very little.

"When our middle-aged men were boys," continued Bruce, "this country was next thing to a wilderness. We had poor roads, we were way off from

THE OLD FARMHOUSE AND THE NEW Phot'd by C. S. Rexroad

anywhere, so to speak, and we had to live within ourselves a good bit. People here in the backwoods lived in their log cabins in a rude, careless sort of way. I reckon that folks in the older sections would hardly have called us civilized. We hunted and fished and sometimes lived a lazy man's life. When we put up a good, new frame house, and move out of the old log cabin into that, we begin living in it in much the same old fashion.

"But we are picking up better ways and are improving. Most of our land is cleared and the bigger share of our people are living in frame houses, generally painted white. We have telephones and some other modern conveniences. We haven't the start some of the new states have, because we haven't had their opportunities. But we are coming out, and if all goes well we shall be up with any of them yet.

"Why, there were only five schoolhouses this side the Cheat when my mother was little. What do you think of that for educational privileges in a big strip of country thirty miles long? Do you wonder we have a powerful lot of people either illiterate or next door to it? Why, it is not twenty years since the first institute was held in this county. When you and me was born, the free school system here in West Virginia was just getting under way.

"But facts is," and Bruce grew earnest, "a good many of us don't get so much out of life as we could. I can point you to people who I don't believe know more than three hundred words. What a little world they live in. What a foggy notion they have of the big world outside of where they've ever been. Such people don't know what they miss, though of course

they can't know any better way till they have been shown.

"When people live in a little seven-by-nine shell of a world, they run too much to petty trifling things. They look too much at each other's private concerns. Now there's nothing in that. It is only half living. Such persons need to be woke up. Their intellects is too near dormant. There's a side in their nature that hasn't had any show. And like a field that runs to weeds if you don't cultivate it, so these fellows let their animal appetites rule them. Their comfort in life is eating, sleeping, rubbing snuff, drinking whiskey and hard cider, and running to coarse thoughts and loose conduct. When they are not doing their necessary work, they simply loaf—kill time. They get mighty few new ideas in that way. What ideas they do have they chew over and over. Friendly chat is a very pleasant and necessary thing, but it gets stale after a while unless you have something new to put into it. Time is too good a thing to fool away."

Bruce was silent a few moments. He picked up a stalk of grass and began chewing it as he lay in his half-recumbent posture.

"Most all of us," he resumed, "have aspirations toward some better way. We really want to make more of ourselves and get more real enjoyment out of life. But we don't always see clear. We need a little lift. When a young person goes away to school, he get's that sort of lift from associating with others who are ambitious. There's an inspiration in it. But every person can't go away to school. There's room for missionary work right here among us and we've got to do it ourselves. We need

school libraries, and more progressive teachers, and more reading matter in our homes.

"Now you take a person who don't read and don't go a day's journey from home ever. His patriotism is all right so far as it goes, but its mighty narrow. The more he looks out on the outside world, the more esteem he'll have for his native hills. Travel costs money, but a few dollars in books and papers is a good substitute, and it goes a long way if it's used right.

"There are men who think it's a waste of money to buy a book. Perhaps they don't read one after they get it. That's because they weren't trained right when they were small. They didn't have teachers that cared for books. But you take a young person in school who has got a taste for good reading, and in his studies he'll go all around the one that don't look into a book when he hasn't got to. And when he grows up he makes a more interesting person to associate with and a better and more useful citizen. Now let him take two or three good papers or magazines regularly and buy one or two standard books each year. What an education he can pick up in his lifetime. The expense is mighty little. The man who would sooner sit around than read a book will spend what it would cost in ways that do him no good at all. And by failing to keep his intellect bright, he grows into a dull-witted, uninteresting person by the time he's an old man. Why, a man that keeps his mind fresh needn't grow old—not until his body utterly breaks down.

"We people in the country have a grand opportunity, if we only knew it. When a newspaper goes into a home, it is read all through. And when a

book does get read, it is not galloped over. People remember what they read. Their reading does them some good. And after all, our people are really inclined to provide themselves with reading matter, if they feel sure it is a good article. They often make trifling excuses, but that's from force of habit.

"On the other hand, people in the towns have lots more books and papers within their reach. They have an opportunity and don't half use it. The business men let their occupations rush them, and they think of little else. They get narrow and hard. Those town people who have the time as well as the inclination will read more in a week than we do in a year—and remember less. It is like water going through a sieve—nothing stays back, hardly. Most of them read only fiction—can't stand anything solid. There's others that you see hanging around the street by the hour, and it seems to be their greatest ambition to see how many of these infernal cigarettes they can fuddle their brains with in a day, and how much beer they can swill down.

"Yes, sir, good healthy literature is a necessity—one of the necessities of life. And it is not an expensive one, either, when you are not imposed on by a book agent. And yet some men will talk as if they would sooner spend money for anything else than a book. Why, when you read a book or a magazine article or hear a great speaker, the writer or lecturer is giving you the very best that's in him. If we was to meet such people in everyday life, they might strike us as very common folks. A man can't be on dress parade all the time. But when we read or hear him, we know him at his best and that's the most important thing.

That is what brings the uplift and sets us to thinking and puts new ideas into us.

"But to change the subject a little, we are wonderfully favored in the fuel question. We could burn wood if we wanted to, but we burn coal because it takes less labor to get our fuel in that form. There may be more wealth under the surface than on top. No one knows but what we have natural gas—and perhaps oil. Then we have pure air and pure springs of water, and the country is well suited to grazing. It is no good farming country, although we have some good land and some special crops do well. Much of our land is steep, and we sometimes get tired of thumping over the rocks, but that keeps the country from having a sameness. The view changes as often as you change your place. These hills make the scenery more inspiring. Anyway, our people are very patriotic. We have no public works to keep all our people to home, but that is not altogether a loss. No indeed. When all our coal gets opened up, this won't be so desirable a country we live in as it is now. Over there in the north you see that bank of coke smoke from the ovens on yon side of the mountain about Fairchance. Once in a while that smoke drifts clean over here. When our own coal is opened up, we'll have the same nuisance right here with us. And then taking out the coal will dry up our springs and make the surface cave in in places, so that it won't be so good for farming and grazing as it was. And that's not all yet. We may expect the works to bring in a general mixing-up of people; Italians, Hungarians, Slavs, to say nothing of Roanoke niggers and the toughest elements in our American people. They will live on garbage, fight,

gamble and drink, and make life and property unsafe."

"I don't think I'd want to be here when that development comes," remarked Thornwood.

"Nor me, either. I could sell my coal for more than the surface is worth, and I'd sell the whole while I was about it. That is what others will do. They will move into some town and foreigners will go into their houses to live. After a while the houses will go to rack and the change of population will make the country districts go down at the heels. They will deteriorate. Stiil, we needn't borrow any great amount of trouble yet a while. All this coal can't be opened up in one year, or in ten, or in twenty, and some of us may never be disturbed in our day.

"This thing they call progress may be all right, but we pay a stiff price for it; a mighty stiff price. It seems to be considered the proper thing to use up our natural resources as fast as we possibly can and to waste what we don't use. In a few years there will be hardly a saw-log or cross-tie in this country. Then see the logs in the woods and streams that have been sawed and left to rot. We clear up rocky hillsides that ought to be left in wood. The streams run nearly dry in the fall, and our big towns are beginning to be bothered at times for want of a sufficient water supply. There's a scramble to see how fast the iron and coal can be got out of the ground. They say iron will take the place of wood for a good many purposes, but iron and coal are things that don't grow.

"Then look how the cities are spreading out. The country districts don't gain many people. Some-

times they don't hold their own. But in most towns you see mighty few empty houses, and in the cities you don't see a one. The big towns and cities take nearly all the growth and the villages take what is left. Grown people are packed like herrings into mills, department stores, and sky-scrapers, and the young folks are put through an educational hash-chopper for nine or ten months of the year. They have no time or chance for play and they have to get their lessons outside of school. They get pale and near-sighted.

"The city is everything nowdays, the country nothing. I look for the time when our present style of country life will be crowded out; and I hate to see that time come. I fear that in the long run we shall lose as much as we gain. The times we live in are all right to a certain extent, but it's like veneered furniture—looks very nice, but it's mighty shallow. It makes me think of an over-fed horse. He eats only so much and paws up the rest of his feed. This rush and racket is sapping the vitality of the nation. It makes people stiff, starchy, and artificial in their manners. They get so they don't think it worth while to take a well-considered thonght or to show an interest in you—unless they can get something out of you. Some of these days there'll be a rebound. People will cut loose from their fever stage and live so as to get more out of life."

## X

### Clouds on the Sky

> Oh, woman, in thy hours of ease,
> Uncertain, coy, and hard to please.—*Scott.*

"Why, hullo, Jim. Glad to see you back," exclaimed Tom Ross when Thornwood entered the post-office Monday morning.

"I didn't know but you'd be away before I had time to return," replied the absentee.

"Well," said the clerk a little disconcerted at this observation; "fact is, I can get a place down to Grafton. I have an uncle there and he could get me a job of copying in the court-house. Don't say anything about this, Jim. I can save up a good deal of what I make here, but dad blame it, a fellow has got to look out for himself. I don't know. I've thought of the railroad service. I can work my way up there. But say, Jim, let's get up a little crowd of us and go out to the cave to-morrow. I can get let off. Haven't had any picnicking this summer. O, I don't mean no regular picnic, but just a little select crowd of us. Neil will let you have his rig."

"What do I want of a whole rig?" demanded Thornwood.

Tom opened his eyes and then whistled. An amused look crept over his face.

"Jim, you have some object in asking that question of me. Why, man, you can't think of going without some company?"

"Who is there?"

"Oho. You're trying to draw me out. I think Em will go."

This was said with a wink as Tom stooped to nail a cover on a box of eggs. A huckster's wagon was standing before the store.

"Maybe," replied Thornwood in a doubtful accent.

"Why, of course she'll go all right," declared Tom. "But then she's not the only one. There never was a creek with just one fish in it."

Thornwood felt somewhat annoyed. His attempts to mask his preference for Emma Brandon did not deceive the Argus-eyed villagers.

"I really wouldn't mind going," admitted Thornwood. "But then I thought I would not mix up in any picnics or parties before I went into the school."

"Nonsense, man, that won't cut no ice. There wouldn't be but three or four of the school crowd anyway. Mack Woolpert wants to go, and Israel Church might go along to add dignity to the occasion. Give me a nickle and I'll ask Em for you."

"I could spare the nickle, but would sooner do the asking myself. I am not so bashful as all that comes to."

"But you see where it puts you. The girls expect us to give them an outing once in a while. Course they do. And then folks will think it odd if you don't go. You belong here now as much as you do any place, and you are going to teach the school. They'd expect you to take her if you took anyone, and she'd expect it, too. That's right, now. But of course if you had good reasons for not going, that would be another thing."

"Tom, I'll admit you are correct, the way you look at it. I would really like to go, and if you

think I ought to be along, I'll not hang back. But I have a reason for talking the way I did. I'd a little rather not explain now. Some time I may, perhaps."

"You're a queer boy," commented Tom. "Well, I don't want to pry into your affairs. I believe in everybody's attending to their own business. Still, we'd be pleased to have you along."

"I'll go if she'll go with me."

The talk was now interrupted by the entrance of three young men. They fell to examining the shotguns displayed at the end of a counter.

"Don't like that make," said the oldest of the three. "That gun will go off at the brich. It will kill as much game before it as behind it. The stock ain't varnished, and that's to make it look cheap. Mine is varnished so you could see yourself in it."

"Shines so it can be saw two miles," said another. "Scares the game all out o' the woods. That's why you don't shoot no mere'n you do."

Other persons were now fast coming into the store. One of them advanced to the middle of the room and gave a series of winks to draw the attention of the crowd. He was a tall, lank man with round-open eyes and a dark mnstache. His name was Lincoln Matson.

"Look out for some fun," he said in a low tone. "Don't give the thing away. Bill Gene is coming in with a petition."

A moment later a gray-bearded man with very roughly used clothes walked into the room, holding a paper in his hand.

"Gentlemen," said he in a loud, sharp tone. "I've got a petition here to go 'fore the county court.

It's to open a piece o' new road down by my place. We need it powerful bad. That's right now. If you fellers'll all sign it, you'll do me a right smart favor, and I'll do as much for you if I get a chance."

"Bill," said Matson, in his usual deliberate tone, "you need that road mighty bad. Ought t've had it before now. I was talking with A. L. out there on the walk. Him and me will sign it."

"We'll all sign it," said another man, "We'll do that much for you, Bill."

The petitioner handed the paper to the man standing nearest him This individual wrote his name in silence, though not without considerable working of his features. The document was passed from one to another, the gray-bearded man watching the proceedings with much solicitude. Every few moments he poured out a flood of tobacco juice and then made an argument in favor of his petition. When the paper reached Thornwood, that person did not give it more than a casual glance.

"I must ask you to excuse me," he said. "I am not a property owner and have not been in the state long enough to gain a legal residence. That's the only reason why I couldn't help you about your road."

"That don't make no difference," objected the petitioner.

But the next person was now signing it. He in turn passed it on to a florid-faced young man who had followed the petitioner into the store, and who looked at the paper very deliberately. Matson attempted to throw him a significant look, but Bill Gene was just then looking in his direction.

"Why, this is not a petition for a road," said the

florid-faced person, whose name was John Coeman.

"The thunder it ain't!" roared Bill Gene. "Read it, won't y'?"

The petitioner had now whirled about and stood facing Coeman with his feet braced and his hands in his pockets. There was a shaking of heads and knitting of brows, but Coeman with his eyes fixed on the paper was unmindful of these warning glances.

"Why, it's this," said Coeman: "'We, the undersigned, do respectfully petition your honorable court that Bill Gene Benbow be hanged this very day.'"

It was some moments before Benbow took in the situation.

"Thunder of a prank to play on an old man what can't read," he yelled, as he danced about the room. "Dr. Knox writ that out. Danged if I don't go tell the old coon what I think of 'im."

"You must not blame us fellows," began Matson. "We thought the paper was all right—"

But the indignant petitioner was already hurrying toward the doctor's office.

"He won't find him," said Matson. "But say, John, what made you give the thing away?"

"Look out for these school-teachers," said Ervin Custer, as he entered the store a moment later. "Jim Thornwood had to go over and see Em the first thing. Hozy won't get no work out of him the rest of the morning."

Emma was found in her yard holding the broken ends of a clothes line.

"You are just the one I am looking for," she exclaimed with her cheery laugh. "See the fix I am in? The line went to pulling apart while I was hanging out my washing. I was just in time to keep

it from going down, but now I can't do one thing or the other."

"They say, 'A friend in need is a friend indeed,'" replied Thornwood as he went to the rescue.

"That's all now," said the girl, when the break was mended. "I had the last piece on the line. Won't you come in the house? You've been away some time."

"I hope you got your certificate all right," she afterward remarked, as she led the way to the sitting-room.

"Yes, it is a Number One. I got it just as I left Kingwood."

"That's good," said Emma, with a pleased look.

"But the trouble is," pursued Thornwood, "I may have more vacation before school begins than I really prefer."

"You might go chestnutting and hunt and have a good time," suggested Emma.

"Perhaps I shall have to."

"The young folks have been talking about how they will like their new teacher," remarked the girl. "I think they have a favorable impression. You haven't been up about town much and they don't know you too well. I reckon that's all the better."

"I shall visit among them after school begins. But changing the subject, Miss Emma, how would you like to be one of a little party that is going to the cave to-morrow morning?"

There was some increase of color in Emma's face and her smile changed its expression. It was a moment before she replied. Thornwood could not but observe her hesitation and he wondered what it

meant. Yet he made a wrong surmise, as was very often the case with him.

"I thank you very much, Mr. Thornwood," replied Emma. "I would like to go right well, but I have arranged to go to-morrow to my aunt's. She wishes me to help her some, and I can better go now, before the girls start to school."

"Very well," was the brief reply, and another topic was broached.

After receiving this rebuff, Thornwood meant to take an early leave, so as to show his resentment. Yet he found himself staying till the clock struck twelve, and he declined an invitation to dinner only because he had promised to help his employer in the afternoon.

Thornwood had been quick to see that Emma Brandon showed very little of that restraint in conversation which springs from self-consciousness. She never lacked for something to talk about. There was a repose in her manner which was restful to him and caused her society to be pleasing, no matter how commonplace the topic might be which they chanced to discuss.

Emma had told him why she could not go, but Thornwood could not see her refusal as it was meant. He jumped to the conclusion that there must be a deeper motive for her course.

On his way to Neii's, he fell in with Mack Woolpert.

"I'll not be in your crowd to-morrow," announced Thornwood.

"What, what? How's this?" demanded Woolpert.

"I'm not very well acquainted here yet. I'd

sooner not go with one of the school girls just at present. And then I've seen the cave already."

How evasive people can be when it suits their purpose, and how heavily they will press against the line separating the true from the untrue.

Woolpert looked suspiciously at his companion.

"I suppose I can believe as much of that as I like?" he suggested.

"What's wrong with what I said?" demanded the younger man.

"Why, it don't look reasonable. There's Em Brandon. She don't need to go off to-morrow."

This opinion was simply an offhand guess, but Thornwood took it as embodying the actual fact, and he allowed it to form a dark cloud on his mental vision.

"Why is it you don't seem able to suggest anyone else?" demanded Thornwood.

"O Jim, Jim! You needn't look so dagonned innocent. Takes a widower like me to see through all that. Well, don't know as I can go, either. Tipley wants me to roof his shed to-morrow."

"I have a little news for you," said Neil to his employee as soon as the latter had returned. "The boy that worked for me is back, and he wants to stay till October. Then he's going away for good. I had promised to hold the place for him, you know. I oughtn't to have done that. I knew at the time it might embarrass me, but I never looked for him back at all. But then you know how it is with these young fellows. Well, I have just been over to Edley's to see about some cattle. His barn got burnt and he's bound to put up some kind of shelter. He's a right handy man himself, but can't do all his work

alone and can't afford to hire a regular carpenter. I told him about you and he said that was just the thing. You can put in a month with him. Then you can come back here and stay till the end of your term if you wish to, and take your board out in chores. You know work is scarce, and I thought this opportunity might strike you pretty well. If the thing suits, the boy can drive you over this very evening, so you can take along all the things you may need. This man Edley lives the other side of Hacklebarney over nigh the river."

"It was very kind in you to find me the place," replied Thornwood. "I'll go over there at once." And he mentally added: "This lets me out from going to the cave."

But as it is not worth our while to follow the young man in his carpentering, we shall pass over this brief episode in his career.

It was the hour of daybreak when he began his return to Gladetown. The morning sun had begun to peep from behind the wooded crest of Briery Mountain. In the middle distance was the winding river Cheat, hidden in the mighty channel it had carved through the valley. Marking its course lay a ribbon of fog towering far above the turbulent waters below. The rays of the sun fell upon the gray cloud and gave it a silvery brightness. Its outlines grew ragged. Small portions flecked away and vanished into thin air as the flood of light grew warmer. At length the fog cloud rose from the river level, grew thinner and thinner, and long before noon it was gone.

But there was no foggy chill on the uplands. Jack Frost had not yet come in good earnest, although the foliage of the forest trees had begun to lose its sum-

mer freshness. The oak, latest of all trees to spring into leaf, was also the last to hold its full tide of greenness. The numerous chestnuts were turning yellow, though in very uneven degree. Of less frequent occurrence was the gum, rendered beautiful by its vesture of warm, brilliant red.

There were dry-looking spots in the sward of the house yards, for no rain had lately fallen, and the thirstiness of the coarse, rock-made soil was seen in the accumulation of dust in the road. It was also manifest in the disappearance of the periodic springs, in the drying up of the smaller watercourses, and in the shrinking of the larger. Pastures looked still drier than the yards, and the leaves of the blackberry canes were much tarnished. Milkweeds were opening their bolls and unfolding their white, gossamer contents.

Here and there was a tree burdened with the coils of a huge grapevine. The roadside fence, also, was occasionally festooned with masses of vine, from which were drooping clusters of small, dark fruit. Mingled with the grapevines were the thorny runners of the greenbrier, pendulous with their own grape-like clusters. Bunches of elderberries, gray with dust, nodded in the fence corners and stood side by side with the larger growing pokeberries. Among the hazel bushes which also lined the roadway were large shrubs, weighted with the countless red berries of the dogwood and the rose apple and the darker hued berries of the haw. Of much larger growth was the wild cherry, much of whose fruit had now fallen and lay withering on the ground.

Striped squirrels ran along the fence rails. Cottontail rabbits bounded away in alarm. Flocks of par-

tridges took wing and flew to a safer distance. Gartersnakes thrust out their red, forked tongues and then crawled away in the grass. Yellow-jackets hovered about the apples which had fallen from seedling trees. From the rock quarries near Rowlesburg came the occasional reverberation of a blast.

Passing a house, he inhaled the odor of boiled cabbage. Going toward the dwelling was a neighbor woman, knitting as she walked. He presently left the road and followed a path, the Spanish needles sticking plentifully to his clothing. The path led through a lonely field, wherein was an old log barn, and in the shadow of the building was a rusting mower and the wreck of a spring-toothed hayrake. The path took him into a road leading down a narrow valley bordered by steep hills. The slopes were sometimes cleared, although most thickly strewn with flattish fragments of rock. The narrow belt of grassy bottom was threaded by a small, serpentine water channel.

Nearly smothered by the bushes and briars which bordered an unused field was a fallen house, while on a distant hillside he could see the empty windows of a vacant frame dwelling ; a not unusual sight in this region, although it fails to prove any falling off in the population.

When he had passed the brow of Potato Hole Knob, crowned with its tall, solitary tree, and could see the expansive valley about Gladetown, the spot appeared even more homelike than when he returned from the bark peeling. The houses of the village were mainly white, and they stood conspicuous against the background of the ridge beyond. Before

he descended into the glades, he sat a few moments on a fallen tree.

"It is only a month now till the school begins," he soliloquized. "In the meantime I shall not be on expense and I can earn a little. I am going to do my full duty by that school, so far as I can see it. Perhaps that will give me some reputation and prestige. I am laying by nearly all I make, and when spring opens I shall have quite a little sum. Maybe I can be more useful as a teacher than in any other capacity, although there is not enough in the business to depend on that resource alone. By another year I must see about establishing myself more permanently in some spot. It will do to act as hired man for a while, but a person can't be content till he has a home of his own. So far, it is a very humble beginning that I've made, but it is a beginning and things have been coming my way. If all goes well, I shall work up and become better circumstanced. Perhaps—I shall not be alone always."

Thornwood did not then know he was counting his chickens before they were hatched.

Coming at last into a highway he met Abner Dodrill in his farm wagon.

"What strange things a fellow will see when he has no gun," said Abner, drawing rein in order to have a chat.

"All sorts of ugly animals," returned Thornwood.

"Well, how are you coming on?" queried the driver.

"Very well, I believe, taking everything into account."

"Going to be with us at Gladetown this winter?"

"I suppose so. At any rate I have a contract for

the school and can stay on at Neil's and do chores for my board."

"Good for you. Well, how's things over 'bout Kingwood?"

"Can't say much, for I haven't been there since examination."

"Then you haven't heard the news about Hozy Neil?"

"No, what is it?"

"Why, he was put in jail and hanged and we are going to bury him."

"Why don't you tell me something I can't believe?"

"Didn't want to tell you too big a yarn at first. Going out to see your girl?"

"Who said I had one?"

"Don't try to fool people," said Dodrlll with a knowing, complacent wink, as he gathered up the harness lines and took his foot off the rim of the carriage bed.

Hosea Neil was found under a large oak. A socket had been cut in the trunk, and into this was fitted the end of a heavy beam, which at the free extremity furnished the squeezing power for a primitive cider press. A wagon-load of apples lay close by, and a barrel, resting on its side, was being slowly filled with juice. Ervin Custer stood near, his feet spread out and his hands in his pockets.

"They say a bad penny always returns," remarked Neil.

"Drunk, too," added Custer. "See how he stumbled over that apple. He's been into some speakeasy this morning."

"I see your apple picking is not over with yet," said Thornwood.

"Land, no," replied Neil, "There's a whole slew out in the orchard now. Never knew such a heavy crop as we have this year; and fine quality, too. Thousands of bushels gone to waste in this county; and all for want of an outlet. Too far from market to pay to haul them."

"They won't rot so fast now," observed Custer. "See how this fellow puts them away. Eats one in two bites. Well, Jim, reckon you will have to go up town and see Em before you do any work for Hozy."

Thornwood took no seeming notice of the last remark. But as night approached, he turned his steps toward the village. Emma was stooping at her flower bed, pinching off a stalk of chrysanthemum.

"Good evening, Miss Emma."

"Good evening, Mr. Thornwood."

There was an awkward pause; awkward so far as the man was concerned. Emma did not greet him with her usual sunny smile and did not ask him to the house. He did not think her manner showed pique, yet she now appeared distant to him.

'You always seem to have flowers," observed the young man leaning on the picket fence.

"Yes, but these are about all there are now." was her unanimated reply.

Another pause, broken this time by the girl.

"I suppose you are counting the days now till the school begins," she remarked.

"Yes, it is only a month. Have you been chestnutting?"

"Yes, twice. I went with some of the young folks."

Thornwood was wondering whether Emma preferred a chestnutting trip to a picknicking. There was still another pause, during which the prospective teacher took his elbow off the fence and showed manifest signs of moving away.

"Will you have one of these chrysanthemums for a buttonhole bouquet?" inquired the girl.

"Just as you like."

It was now the man's tone that had become distant.

Emma did not appear to hesitate at the doubtful response, for she came to the fence and pinned one of her flowers to the lapel of Thornwood's coat.

"Thank you," he replied, stepping back to the sidewalk.

"Won't you come in and play some pieces?" she asked.

There were symptoms of a thaw in her demeanor, but although the man did not regard the symptoms as very strong, he hesitated a moment before replying.

"Will another time do as well?"

It was now her turn to hesitate as she stood with her eyes downcast and her hands toying a sprig of chrysanthemum.

"Yes, if it don't suit you now."

"Very well," replied Thornwood as he moved away.

It was one of Thornwood's failings that he was inclined to take snap judgment. It did not occur to him that the seeming coolness of the girl might not have been intentional. Neither did it occur to him that he was in no way the cause. Yet it was not many moments before he began to regret his hasty

leavetaking and his ostentatious display of wounded pride. His regret would have been all the deeper had he known that Emma stood watching him until he had turned the corner of the street.

"I can be very soon forgotten after being away a little while," was the man's bitter thought as he walked moodily toward his employer's house.

## XI

### A Box Supper and the Sequel

> Love will suspect where is no cause for fear.—*Shakspere.*

The schoolhouse at Gladetown was a fair type of the better class of school buildings in Preston county. It was painted white and the windows, like those of the dwelling-houses, were unprovided with blinds. The door was in the middle of the end facing the street. Above the entrance was a garret window with only three of its twelve lights unbroken, and above the mutilated window was a flagstaff placed in the apex of the gable. A few yards to the right of the building and on a line with the front end, was an unsightly coal shed. It was nearly as black as its contents and the upper hinges of the door were broken. Next the road was a bare clay bank, ascended by a well-worn foot path. There was no fence on this side, and neither was there visible any line to mark off the contracted school grounds from the premises of the nearby church. There was not a shade tree in the yard and there were bare spots where the trampling of many feet kept the grass from growing.

The door opened at once into the only room. At the farther end was a raised platform occupying half the breadth. It contained a small desk and a common chair. On the former was a dictionary without a cover. The loosened leaves were thrown together in hopeless confusion. The patent desks were in

fairly good conditlon, although they had not escaped the ravages of pocket-knife, pencil, and ink. In number, they were more than the room could suitably accommodate. As for special recitation seats, there were none, except that in each of the front corners was a low, home-made bench, unprovided with a back and easily upset.

In the middle of the room was a round, upright stove, of the "Burnside" pattern, and although of fine heating qualities it was no more an ornament than a camp kettle. It was cracked and fire-burnt, and the stovepipe, rusty and battered, passed over the teacher's desk into the chimney. In a rear corner were an oil can, a discolored water pail, and a broom worn into the shape of a new moon. At each side of the the door was a row of big nails for use as hat hooks. The plastering had given way in several spots, and dark places in the ceiling told of leaks in the roof. Cracks traversed the dingy walls in all directions. Two lamp frames, each holding a dust-laden lamp, were fastened to the wall. And finally, resting on the end of a shelf, was a dusty flag presented to the school by a patriotic order.

The opening day found the thirty pupils, about evenly divided as to sex, assembling at a very early hour. Old Glory had been flung to the breeze. Dinner baskets and dinner pails were placed on the shelf that ran above each line of hooks. The book piles, dumped on the desks, indicated the seats the owners had chosen. Some of the pupils had on better clothes than they expected to wear at school cnstomarily. Rouie Latch had come with a pair of eye-glasses she did not really need and did not again wear. Ruth Dutton had placed a bunch of house flowers on the

teacher's desk. All were busily talking in groups of two, three, or four, and speculations as to the new teacher were not the most prominent theme, although curious glances were sometimes thrown in his direction.

"Come on, Am," exclaimed one of the older boys. "Let's go over into the back lot and play ball. Enough of us for a game. Half an hour to books, ain't it, Mr. Thornwood?"

"Neariy so," replied the pedagogue.

"Can't play," said George Dowers. "I skun my hand the other night and it's sore as the dickens."

"Done that Halloweening, when he was pulling cabbage," declared Susan Pugh.

The boy made no reply, but his smile was a guilty one.

"I'm rather glad school's begun," remarked Belle Reyman, an undersized girl. "It would be too lonesome to stay at home all through the bad weather."

"O yes," assented Rouie. "I don't mind it so much in winter, but I got awfully tired last summer when I went away to that pay school. I didn't stay till it was out."

"Wonder if Mr. Thornwood will be as cross as the last teacher was," ventured Belle. "I'm glad they didn't have him again. He was partial to the biggest ones."

"He learned us right well," replied Rouie. "I think this man will be good natured if he keeps on going to see Em."

"O, I'm always good, ain't you, Ella?" laughed the first speaker turning to another schoolmate.

"Dingle dangle, razzle dazzle. There goes his hand bell. Let's go in, boys, and see the circus open,"

said Ami Bayne catching a flying ball and tossing it in his hands while walking to the schoolhouse.

Five minutes later the pupils were sitting orderly at their desks, waiting to see how the new teacher would acquit himself for the first day.

"Well, how's it go, Thornwood?" inquired Grant Harley, as the new teacher entered the store Wednesday afternoon. "Any bad boys and girls to keep in to-day ?"

As was usually the case, a large share of the pupils had come into the store after the close of the evening session. Some called for the mail, some had other errands, and some had no errands whatever, except to see and be seen. But in this instance, all had now left the room.

"No," replied Thornwood, "there was only some special work, such as one has to look after during the first week."

"How's the school suit you?" continued the merchant.

"Quite well, indeed," was the response. "It compares favorably with those I have known. I hadn't taught for three years, and so it didn't come quite so easy to settle into the harness as it would if I had kept in the work right along. But I think I am hooking on in pretty fair shape."

"You'll have no trouble, I reckon," said Harley assuringly. "We don't have a very bad crowd here, and you seem to be making a good impression so far. I hear the scholars speak very favorable."

At the hour for final dismissal on the second Monday, Thornwood requested all the older pupils to meet him at his desk before leaving the room.

The day had gone smoothly, yet significant glances passed from one to another.

"You'll get it for talking in class," whispered Rouie Latch, vigorously nudging her desk-mate.

"I never," declared her companion. "It was that gas of a Suse Pugh."

"He'll trim you up for tossing Suse that note," said Am Bayne to his own companion.

"Ye-es, and you'll get a withing, too," declared the other. "You was crooked round in your seat gawping on this monkey's slate while he drawed old Thornwood's picture."

The designated pupils came forward looking rather sheepish. The smaller ones lingered in the rear in the hope of seeing what sort of punishment would be meted out to their elders.

"I am not asking you to stay on account of any misbehavior," explained the teacher. "I want to talk with you about the blackboard. The one we have is not suitable. It is made of boards and is too hard. It makes noise and wastes the chalk, and that causes too much dust."

The faces before the desk had already brightened.

"And we can't make no good diagrams," said the tall boy who had been spoken of as a monkey. "There's them chinks between the boards, and then the blackboard is so slick in places it won't hardly take chalk at all."

"We need a better one mighty bad," declared Am. "This is the most advanced school in the district and we ought to have something good. I know better blackboards than this one."

"That's it," said Thornwood. "We need a new one here. I spoke to the board of education, but

they say this blackboard is considered serviceable yet, and they couldn't give us a new one without putting one of the same kind in every schoolhouse in the district. They feel that they have to treat all alike. Now let's take the matter up ourselves and devise some way to raise the funds."

"I'd be in for that," replied the monkey.

"We'll back you up," said another of the older boys.

"Can't we have an exhibition," suggested Susan.

"Too soon. That might do toward the end of the term, but we need the blackboard as soon as we can get it."

"Let's have a box supper," proposed Mabel Forrest, a girl who wore glasses and had a way of contracting her brows when she spoke.

,'I had thought of that," replied the teacher. "It would not break in on our school work. I think we can get the use of Mr. Coeman's hall if we furnish the fuel and leave the room as good as we find it. Wouldn't ice cream be a good feature?"

"We can have that all right," was Am's eager response.

"We can get the freezer from the hotel," put in Rouie.

"Why not have oysters, too?" asked Ella.

The faces brightened still more at the suggestion of oysters, but Am threw a damper on it.

"Cost like the dickens. Knock the profits all off."

"I think Am is right," said the teacher. "We would all enjoy having the oysters, but the expense would be too heavy. With the ice cream and the boxes, we would not have to pay out but very little. Now let each of you be a committee of one to talk the matter up when you go home. If it is thought

favorably of, we'll make definite arrangements at this time to-morrow. We'll get through with books a little bit early on that account."

"We'll do that," said the crowd with enthusiasm. "We'll work it up all right."

Above the store of J. H. Coeman was a hall used chiefly by the two secret orders of the neighborhood. On Thursday night of the same week this hall contained nearly every member of the school and a numerous delegation of their elders. In one corner was a stack of pasteboard boxes tied with twine. Two long tables placed end to end occupied the middle space.

"A box supper is a new experience with me," remarked Thornwood to Matson. "What is the best way to get at the thing? Auction them off?"

"I wouldn't favor that," replied Matson. "Them that looks the best on the outside will go the highest and there's a chance for some one to feel hurt. You see some of the boxes are very clean outside and put up attractive. Others are smooched some, but that needn't always count agen them. You can't find a perfectly clean box every time you go to the store. I'd go in for selling them at one price—twenty-five cents a box—and hand them out by turn, so's not to give the fellows a chance to pick the nice looking ones first. Then there'd be no favoritism."

"No, I wouldn't auction them," added Mack Woolpert. "Our people haven't been used to that and the boxes might go off slow."

"Any way you think best," said Thornwood.

"Let Linc Matson here knock them off," suggested Woolpert. "He's the best one in this crowd for that business."

"Go ahead, Mr. Matson," said the teacher.

"All right," was the response in a somewhat drawling tone, as Matson brought his tall, spare form to its full height and poised the topmost box upon his upraised hand. "Here you are, gentlemen. Who'll be the first? Enough in here for three hungry men. Makes my hand tired holding it up. Wake up, wake up, don't be bashful. Good for you, Van. Some one had to begin. Who'll be the next? Dainty little box, this is. Some sweet girl put it up. That's right, Am. And here's another. Let the good work go on."

"Wonder what kind of box you had?" asked Ed Calder, who was sitting near Emma Brandon.

"Oh," laughed Emma, "It held men's shoes one time—a big pair, too; and a red string round it."

And Ed Calder waited until a box appeared which answered the description.

"Here's a dandy little box!" exclaimed Matson, as he took up another. "You'll find the name of your honey inside."

"Huh," said Susan Pugh in a tone of deep disgust. "There goes my box to one of those gawkies from Willow Point. I reckon I shall have to eat with that heathen. No honey of mine by a big sight."

"You know I wouldn't eat with you for anything," said George Dowers to Daisy Brandon. "But I'll have a good piece when you come to lead the League if you'll tell me how you wrapped up your box."

"With a string."

"Don't be mean, Daise. You know I was always good to you."

The black-eyed girl was playing with her fingers. Her own box would probably come next, and she

would sooner risk a different partner. It would have suited her very well to see her teacher buy it.

"Long, narrow box with a blue string," she said slowly.

But the teacher did not resort to these insidious methods. He waited until a box was held up which proved slow of sale. With some annoyance he found it contained the name of a girl of ten years.

"Tom, do you care to trade?" he asked.

"N'm. Not much, old fellow. Had to make one trade as it was."

Tom Ross held out a slip containing the name of Olive Custer.

"Well," admitted Thornwood, "I wouldn't if I were in your place. Would you exchange, Mr. Bruce?"

"Just as lief," was the ready reply. "Makes no difference to me."

So David Bruce ate with a child of one-third his years, while Thornwood was the table companion of a married lady older than himself.

"The ice cream will come next and that will not be a blindfold affair," thought the teacher.

The boxes were emptied and put aside, and ice cream began to be served. Emma Brandon was now standing with Susan and Daisy at the front end of the room away from the crowd of masculines.

"The boys are slow to step up," observed Emma. "They must be afraid of the girls."

"Afraid of their purses," suggested Susan.

After the frosty interview with Emma on his return to Gladetown, it was some time before Thornwood again met the girl. It happened at the door of the church. Emma had resumed her usual demean-

or and Thornwood was mollified at once. As they walked down the street together, the incident of the chrysanthemums was discreetly ignored. A rather plain hint easily induced the teacher to follow the girl into the house and put the organ to use once more.

Making a show of acting very deliberately and without previous intention, Thornwood now broke off a conversation with a patron of the school and went to where his magnet was standing.

"Miss Emma, will you take ice cream with me?"

"Why yes," was the ready response.

Susan Pugh smiled knowingly to Daisy Brandon and was answered with a roguish look in her laughing eyes.

"Won't we prank him to-morrow?' whispered Susan.

"Both of them." was the amending reply.

The partners at ice cream were soon engaged in such an animated talk that they became almost oblivious to whatever else was passing on in the room. At length they perceived that another couple might need the space they were monopolizing.

As Thornwood was passing out of the room he met Woolpert.

"Jim," said Mack in an undertone, "you needn't try to fool me any more."

When the teacher was returning to the schoolhouse near the close of the next morning's recess, he found Ruth Dutton, another dark-eyed girl, standing with Grace Brandon between the entrance and the top of the bank. For his benefit and edification they were singing these improvised couplets.

"Meet me at the ice cream supper,

Emma mine, Emma mine.
Meet me at the dooryard entrance,
Emma mine, Emma mine.
Meet me when 'tis sleighing weather,
Emma mine, Emma mine."

Thornwood gave chase and with a scream of roguishness the girls broke and ran, but were overtaken and a snow bath applied to their cheeks. Entering the house, he surprised Susan and Daisy while they were covering the blackboard with couplets consisting of his own name and Emma's. But on the desk he found a bunch of geranium flowers bound up with a paper slip on which was written this line :

"Presented to our new brother."

Underneath was an envelope inclosing a bit of verse scrawled in an awkward hand by another person than the one who had perpetrated the stanzas.

Once upon a moonlight evening,
While the sled ran slow and squeaking,
Over many a long and crooked turn of West Virginia's hills;
While Jim plodded, sort o' thinking,
All at once there came a bumping,
As of some heart loudly thumping,
Thumping 'gainst him, making thrills.
"'Tis surely Emma's heart," he muttered,
"Thumping 'gainst me, making thrills—
This it is and bodes no ills."

How our teacher's thoughts are gliding,
Forward to the time he's biding,
When, oh when he'll do the asking,
And he'll speak a word to Em.
See the smile come to his visage,
At the red house in the village,
When perchance he's gained the courage—
Courage that will win our Em—
Yea, the blithe and sunny maiden whom our teacher calls his Em.
Oh, that word! 'twill make him hem.

## XII

### What the Holidays Brought

Lovers have an ineffable instinct which detects the presence of rivals.—*Bulwer.*

Thornwood imagined that Emma did not like to be very closely teased, and he knew that the school girls would seek to torment her as well as himself. He doubted whether she would have been visible to him, had he called very shortly after the amusement the pupils enjoyed at his expense. He did not regret that the following Sunday was stormy and also not the day for preaching at the village church. It was a full week before he made another appearance at Emma's home, and he thought this lapse of time might cause the sequel to the box supper to have become an old story. So far as he individually was concerned, he did not mind the teasing, although he was more than willing that the attention given to his personal affairs should be less conspicuous. Yet if this attention had been carried even further, it might have wrought a material change in the course of our story and saved Thornwood a good deal of pain.

His knock was answered by Daisy, who had the usual roguish look in her eyes.

"Won't you come out in the dining room?" she asked. "We girls are having some popcorn and we want some one to help us eat it up."

The teacher made a willing response and followed his pupil through the hall to the dining-room, where

he found Grace and her little sister, and also their cousin, Lulu Wix, a child of about eight years.

Daisy and Grace were themselves quite good entertainers, and their teacher stayed with them until the popcorn had disappeared. They were more talkative than usual, and Thornwood was enough inflated to imagine this might be due to an approval of the acquaintance between him and their sister.

Lulu Wix, of whom he made a pet, was now sitting on his knee.

"Is Emma at home?" inquired Thornwood at length.

"Yes," said Daisy, "she's in the front room. Just go on in."

"Take me in," demanded Lulu.

The man saw waggishness in the child's eyes, yet he took her up on his arm.

"You kid better stay out here with us," said Grace rather insincerely as the event proved.

Emma was the sole occupant of the sitting-room and she was hooking a rug.

"Don't you wish I was Emma," now said the terrible infant, curling her arm about her teacher's neck and looking him in the face. "She's a sweet girl. Don't you wish you could kiss her—like that."

And the child illustrated her meaning in a very practical manner.

Emma did not look up, yet she knew perfectly well what was going on and her face turned to a lively red.

"Don't you wish Emma could box your ears?" said Thornwood to the child. "I think we'll have to change your name to Lulu Wicked."

"Lulie gets off too many smart things," observed Emma.

"You're beginning a rug early, aren't you?" inquired the caller. "Winter hasn't fairly begun yet."

"I don't know," was the reply. "The days will not get much shorter and there's the least bit of snow on the ground already. We have to do something to keep busy."

"I see they put you and me on the committee for the Christmas entertainment," said Thornwood. "What sort of one can be got up?"

"It's beginning a little soon," replied Emma. "But perhaps it's better to do that way. It gives more time. O, we generally have a tree when we have anything here at all, and I think we always ought to have something. We can pick out some music and have some pieces to sing. Then some of the young folks can speak pieces, and the bigger boys can look up a tree."

"I suppose you are looking for some gifts," said Emma, after the projected entertainment had been lengthily discussed.

"Where from?"

"Why, from out in Ohio."

"Well, I've always been remembered so far; always a little, anyway. I don't know how it will be this time. You know the old saying, 'Out of sight, out of mind.' O, well, my own folks are likely to remember me, but outside of them and a few relations, it won't go any farther. I suppose you can look for something on the tree?"

"Yes, and in about the same way, I reckon."

But there was a telltale flush on the girl's face which Thornwood did not like to see. It suggested

that her words did not include all she might have said.

"Let me mark the outline of this figure a little more plainly," said Thornwood, drawing his pencil from his pocket. "I don't think you can follow your work any too well with what light there is."

"Thank you, Mr. Thornwood. That makes it ever so much better. I shall have to light the lamp before long. Don't you really get lonesome once in a while, being among strangers?"

"Just a little at times, though not so very much. I hear from home often. But the people don't seem like strangers to me now. Don't you think one may find just as good friends among strangers as among home people?"

"I shonld hope so. Do you still expect to stay with us?

"It looks that way, but perhaps not just in this vicinity."

"There's more talk than ever of a railroad up this valley," remarked Emma. "Then we'll see something going on here."

"Yes, that may be true. I'd sooner be in a country that has a future before it, and I think this is one of that sort. Are you reading this book? How do you like that kind of story?"

Thornwood picked up an open volume lying on the canvas.

"Yes, I read it by snatches. It's a right interesting book. I don't have no use for these trashy stories. I'm very fond of reading and I get the most time for it in the winter."

"This is a good deal like 'Picciola.' Did you ever read that?"

"No, I never heard of it."

Thornwood's inquiries about books were put in a rather uninteresting manner, so as to throw her off her guard if possible, and as they brought the desired result, he now changed the conversation.

"I did think of having a literary started next week if the people wish it, but the holidays will be some interruption, and then the Methodist preacher proposes to start a protracted meeting at New Year's. I hardly know whether it is best to begin a literary now and have it broken into so soon."

"There are three or four weeks for it to get started in," demurred Emma. "When the big meeting is over, the winter may be half gone. I think a literary is such a good thing if carried on anyways proper. There is so little to go to here. O Grace!"

The dining-room door opened in response to the call.

"Bring in some apples, Grace. What are you girls thinking of out there?"

Grace presently reappeared with a pail of red apples which had been rinsed, and she presented Thornwood a plate and a knife.

"I hear your new blackboard has come already," remarked Emma.

"Yes, it came out to-day and Mack Woolpert has just been helping me put it up. We didn't look for it quite so soon. We shall get seventeen weeks' use of it this winter. The term is only three weeks gone yet."

"And the school will appreciate it, I am sure," said the girl, laying down her carpet hook and reaching for an apple.

A few days before Christmas Thornwood met

Emma going to her home with a pail containing the evening's milking. The air was chilly and her white hood was wrapped rather closely about her rosy cheeks.

"Isn't this cold?" she exclaimed. "And no snow on the ground, either. I didn't intend to let this Christmas go by without some sledding weather, but I heard good news a little bit ago, and I don't much care now whether it snows or not."

As is well known, men have no sense of curiosity, but still Thornwood kept wondering what the good news might be. It was not many days before he became wiser—and sadder, also.

"Going over to the shivaree to-night?" inquired Ami Bayne, as the teacher was leaving the village. "Wedding over to Wilton's, you know."

"No," said Thornwood. "I don't think I'll join in."

"Better come go 'long and have some fun. We'll get some cake, too. Them folks down there is good livers and they'll set things up right."

"If you get more cake than you can make way with, you might save me a piece," suggested Thornwood.

"All right," laughed Am.

But from Mr. Neil's porch could be heard the blare of brass horns and the tooting of tin ones, the rattling of sticks on tin pans, and the occasional report of a shotgun.

Christmas eve was soon at hand. A few inches of dry snow had fallen, and the stars twinkled brightly in the calm, clear night-sky. The Gladetown church was better illuminated than usual, and in the front corner opposite the organ was a hand-

some evergreen, lighted with tiny wax candles, trimmed with flags and popcorn, and laden with presents.

Thornwood did not feel any strong assurance that he would find a remembrance on the tree. His sojourn in the community had been brief, and as for Emma, he did not consider that he had any real ground to look for a token from her. He scarcely attempted any longer to mask the pleasure he found in her society, yet his resolution kept him from being willing to avow himself a would-be suitor. But he had from the first resolved to give her a holiday present, and so he put on the tree a copy of "Picciola." He did not put his name on the package, although he was certain that Emma would be at no loss to guess whence it came.

But he was not himself left in the cold. There were two presents bearing his name; a gold pen from the boys of his school, and a dainty and elaborate piece of fancy work from the girls. The teacher suspected that Emma had something to do with this, yet he did not mistrust that it was wholly the toil of her own fingers.

The second day after Christmas Thornwood met Emma at her gate as he was going down the street. The snow had become deeper and the roads were well broken.

"Emma,"—Thornwood had dropped the 'Miss' now,—"I believe you like sleigh rides, and if you don't mind, I'll come round with a cutter this evening."

Emma's smile took on a different expression. There was a look of willingness, yet also of coy re-

luctance. She rubbed down a lump of snow with her shoe tip.

"I thank you so much, Mr. Thornwood, but I could not go this evening."

"There it is again," thought the discomfited pedagogue. "Very well, Miss Emma," he said aloud, kindly but regretfully, as he passed on toward the post-office.

The girl stood some time at the gate, looking at him and wishing he had not gone away so abruptly. She did not expect the man to show pique. A few words could have smoothed the matter considerably, but it did not occur to her to say them. Yet she would have done so had he lingered a while.

But Thornwood could see only one thing at a time. He felt too proud to ask any explanation and he allowed a gratuitous conjecture to rule his conduct.

"Can it be that confounded poetry those school girls got off on me?" was Thornwood's conjecture as he returned to his quarters.

Although the teacher did not use the cutter, he engaged a wagon-sled of Matson and took Emma's sisters and several other school girls on a straw ride.

When he returned he saw a well dressed young man pass out of the post-office and go toward the Brandon home. Yielding to an impulse, Thornwood did not at once return to Neil's, but sat in the store until it closed for the night. As he passed out of the door he observed a light in the parlor window of the Brandon house.

"H'm," muttered the teacher. "They say one and one and three make five. Now I have it. The two mittens I got and this stranger account for it all. She is his intended. I might call, but I might not

be an escort. All right, then. I shall stay away from now on. It is the old story once more. Well, such is life."

In the whirl of his tumultuous thoughts, the young man scarcely heard the creaking of his footsteps in the hard snow. The full moon looked down in the calm, clear air upon the white-robed earth and caused the fields to glisten in the silvery light. Forest trees lifted their dark, leafless branches above the snowy mantle and softened the glare which otherwise would have wearied the eye. No sound broke the stillness save the barking of a dog that saw the movements of the man on foot.

## XIII

### A Martyr to a Resolution

A mighty pain to love it is,
And 'tis a pain that pain to miss;
But of all pains the greatest pain,
It is to love and love in vain.—*Cowley.*

The holiday week was gone; gone with its keen, stimulating air, its sparkling night skies, its crisp sleighing snow, and its general suggestiveness of indoor comfort, merrymaking, and friendly visiting. There came now a medley of snow, rain, and slush, hard roads and soft roads, bright, sunny days and dull, dark days.

A well ordered school routine is a wonderful time-killer, and a week seems hardly more than well begun before the end is at hand. With the new pedagogue the time was passing swiftly. There would be an occasional jar in the working of the school, but these slips in the machinery were of little significance, and Thornwood was told that his labors were meeting the approval of his patrons.

He was attending to his duties even more assiduously than in the opening weeks of the term. He seldom loitered in the village after the close of the school day, and more seldom still did he return after dark. His attendance at League became irregular. He had never affected society very much, and he was more a recluse now than ever.

One Sunday afternoon he was walking with Tom Ross. The sky was cloudy and the frozen ground

was bare of snow. The two friends had come down a path in a belt of woodland, and were before the black, yawning mouth of a coal bank. The opening was now somewhat contracted, because of the stalagmites on the floor, a result of the dripping icicles that depended from the roof. Just above the entrance was a light wreath of vapor, the effect of the outflow of warm air from the upper edge. Within, a faint sound of grunting told that pigs had made the cave a refuge from cold and storm. A wooden tramway lay at the bottom of the trench opening out from the mouth, and blockading this trench was a broken wheelbarrow.

"Mighty dull," exclaimed Tom "Hardly a thing going on to break the monotony. The big meeting has closed and there hasn't been a festival or a party since Christmas week. The holidays is a pleasant time of year. Trade is good, people are buying presents and having a good time. But after New Year's it always seems to me like the bottom had fell out of things. The rest of winter is just a dull drag. I'm not going to spend any more winters here. I've a big notion to quit this spring. There's a store over at Terra Alta I could get into. I don't know. Maybe I'll go to the city. But don't tell anyone here about it. Well, Jim, where do you think you'll be this year?"

"I can't tell," was the non-committal response.

"It's no concern of mine," said Tom, "but I take notice you seem to shut yourself up in a shell nowdays. You don't waste a minute here in town. You get into Sunday school right on time and are mighty near the first one to cut loose and go home. Don't know as we could hold you at all if it wasn't

for your class of boys. And I haven't seen you at the League but twice since New Year's."

"Well," returned Thornwood, "the school is advanced and I have to study some. You know it's quite a piece out to Mr. Neil's. Then there's the chores."

"Things was just the same before Christmas," replied the clerk, with an incredulous smile.

"Yes, but there was more to divert one's attention. Now, I have to make up for that. Do you see anything different in me, Tom?"

"Perhaps not so much on the surface of things. You never was so gay and gassy as some fellows, but you always had a word for a person. You try mighty hard not to let on anything is the matter, but there is some make-believe about it."

"So, Tom, you think you can see through a millstone?"

"This ain't no big millstone."

"What troubles you," said Thornwood with a trace of asperity in his tone, "is that you don't see me calling at the red house lately."

"Of course," affirmed Tom. "Can't help seeing that. I know it's wondered at and nobody seems to know any cause for it."

"I have never heard an intimation that it makes the least difference to anyone," replied Thornwood. "Even Mack Woolpert, who likes to find a joke on me, has never spoken of it."

"You don't go out any place, and so you don't give them a chance to speak of it to you. They have to take it out in talking to themselves. That's the way people have, you know. But if you've had any racket with the girl, I don't consider that's any

of my business. I just thought you might not see what others think. I believe it's hurt you just the least bit. You used to go there a good deal and you broke short off without anybody knowing why."

"Well, Tom, I'll say this to you. Em and I are good friends, as far as I know. I think just as well of her as I ever did. But between you and me, I don't call there because I don't think I ought to. I wouldn't have called so often before if I had known she appeared to be engaged."

"Engaged?" repeated Tom, in a tone of surprise.

"If she isn't, then why does she prink up so fine when Wilber Dorr comes here in his vacations? He is up there every day while he is about. You don't call that any millstone, I hope."

Tom shook his head.

"Don't think Em's engaged. It hasn't gone that far. He's after a good time, and she's good company, you know, so why shouldn't he call there?"

"But can you say they are not engaged?"

"No, I couldn't be that positive."

"Well," declared Thornwood, "you don't convince me. I try to attend to my own business, and that is why I choose to avoid the appearance of coming between a fellow and his best girl. And until I have good reason to think differently, I shall consider I am not mistaken in this case."

"Why don't you walk in and cut him out?" suggested the clerk.

"How would you like for one to try that on in your case?" retorted the teacher.

"Well, if the girl didn't think any more of me than to see me go, then she might go her own gait and welcome. I'd call myself the lucky one. Girls

sometimes like to get shut of the ones they go with, so they can take up with fellows that suit them better. And now see here, Jim; if she's engaged, why should she be coming down from church most every night with Newt Hansell ?"

"Can't prove it by me."

"I don't pretend to have the run of her affairs, but she's not engaged," declared Tom, again shaking his head in a very positive way.

"Well," said Thornwood, who felt that he was pushed into a corner, "it seems that my company will be tolerated when I go to the house, but some one else is preferred as an escort. And I notice the escort stands in all right enough when it comes to staying up in the parlor. So if she prefers Wilber Dorr or Newton Hansell as coming nearer her choice, why that's her affair and it ought to settle the matter."

"But Newt didn't begin going with her till you quit," insisted the clerk. "If there is nothing in the way of his going, there was nothing in your way."

"And if it wasn't right for me it isn't right for him," rejoined the stubborn pedagogue.

"Well," said Tom, "I should still think you would want to have a good time somewhere "

"I don't keep my own company just from choice," explained Thornwood. "I am not what they call a society man, but I like a congenial companion as well, perhaps, as you or anyone else. The fact is, I never could bring myself to go with a girl and make a practice of it, and at the same time not intend it as a courtship."

"Now, Jim, you just give yourself dead away that

time. You've been trying to let on you are not courting Em."

"I don't go out with her."

"You've been going to the house, so what's the difference?"

"I've said more to you than anyone else."

"It won't go no further, you may depend on that. But, Jim, don't you make too strict a rule? Not many fellows do your way."

"Well, Tom, I don't go in for following the crowd unless I'm sure the crowd is right. I couldn't respect myself if I were pledged to one girl, and at the same time causing another one to think she were my choice. And that is a rule I think ought to work the same with both parties. I was brought up to aim to try to be upright and square in all my dealings with other people."

"Then you don't go much on flirts," commented Tom.

"I have no use for a girl flirt and I couldn't be sincere if I approved of flirting on the part of my own sex."

"I see," laughed Tom. "You are a one-girl man, and when you have no girl you go it alone."

"It's a good deal that way," admitted Thornwood. "I don't care to pattern after the butterfly that goes from one flower to another and never stays with any one."

"Most fellows, though, strike in for a good time."

"That might go, if you are sure the girl looks at it the same way you do. But can you always know you are not trifling with her affections, and can she always know that your intentions are not meant in earnest?"

"Well," declared Tom, "when it comes to that, I agree with you. I was talking a good deal for effect. Bnt I guess you don't like to play second fiddle. If you can't be the favored one yourself, you will step over to your side the road and stay there."

"Isn't that a pretty safe course in the long run?"

"Maybe; can't say. Still, I shouldn't think you would want to go without young ladies' society altogether, and just put up with what you see of it in the schoolhouse."

"I can only say it does go rough to be set adrift the way I found myself last Christmas week. But—it will not be so always, I suppose."

As he crossed the village street on his return to his boarding place, Thornwood met Emma, who was about to pass through a door-yard gate. He had encountered her but twice since her refusal of his invitation, both times in the entry of the church. There, they merely nodded to each other. To him her manner seemed a little distant, but so was his own, and he did not try very hard to ask himself whether he had not given cause. But they were now by themselves, and in the old-time smile she wore he saw no intimation of resentment.

"Good day, Miss Emma. I am taking the middle of the road. The sidewalk is icy."

"Indeed it is, but perhaps you don't like Gladetown so well anyway, now."

"I don't know why people should think so," protested Thornwood. "They are mistaken if they do."

He walked on, trying to interpret the covert meaning which he thought was contained in Emma's bantering reply. But why didn't the blockhead stop to

chat with her? He ought to have seen that she expected this of him.

"She seems a good natured girl," thought the young man. "She is inclined to treat me better than perhaps I deserve."

The next afternoon, while on his way home from school, he knocked on the door of the Brandon house aud was ushered by Grace into the sitting-room, where he saw Emma standing before a glass adjusting a collar.

"Why, good evening, Mr. Thornwood. You are a stranger here. I was just fixing up to ride over to my aunt's."

"Then I must not detain you."

"O, I can ride the horse over there before dark if I don't start for half an hour yet. I really must go and I reckon I'll not be back before Monday."

"I called in to see if you will take part in a school exhibition. The school wants one, but we shall have to call in a little outside help."

"Why, yes, I'll help out," was Emma's ready response. "I'll be glad to do anything I can. I often take part in such things."

"All right then, we will count on you. We meet at the schoolhouse to-morrow night to arrange a program. But what makes you cut your hair, Miss Emma? Why don't you let it grow, as most girls do?"

"Don't you like to see me that way? It saves a lot of combing and braiding and what all."

It was several weeks prior to this occurrence that Ervin Custer went into Kingwood to meet his daughter, who was on her way home from visiting a distant friend. They were scarcely seated in their sleigh,

when Olive opened up a running fire of questions:

"How's the new minister liked by this time? Did Mildred lead the League last Sunday? Is David Bruce still at home? How's Lizzie's baby now? Who goes with Emma?"

In answer to the last question the parent gave a muffled laugh and replied: "The teacher has been going to see her at her home right often,—tolerably so, anyway,—but if he means it for courting, its the daggondest sort I ever heard tell on. He never goes out with her any place—yes, he did come home with her from League a time or two, that's a fact. She and Gussie and Edith generally go up by theirselves, but lately, Newt Hansell has been swinging her home from church right lively. Been coming down with her most every night through the big meeting. He's younger than she is, too. They say the teacher seems to think a powerful sight of Em, but danged if he ain't got a queer way of showing it."

Yet the teacher himself knew what he meant—or thought he did.

The morning after the brief visit to Emma's home, Ervin Custer was sitting in Harley's store in his wonted position, his legs crossed and his chair tilted against the counter.

"Queer chap, that Jim Thornwood is," he remarked. "I haven't heard of his going over to see Em this long time till yesterday. He was in a while —mighty little while, though. Must be a bit techy about something."

"She's a joky girl and she might 'a sort o' give 'im the mitten," suggested another frequenter of the store.

"No, she says she don't know what she done to give him cause to quit off so sudden. Least, that's what Sally Ann says."

"Wonder he don't get to going with someone else," observed a third lounger. "Seems to be a right good teacher. I don't hear no complaints."

"Some thinks that entertainment they're gettin' up will cut into the school too much," demurred the second speaker.

"He's not taking the kids so fur along in their books as they went last winter," said the third man.

"I'll say this for him," declared another person, who was leaning against the counter. "My Oly, he went a little furder last winter this time, but what he knows now he knows. I thought I was right good in 'rithmetic, but he called me down in fine shape the other day, and he crowed over it a heap to think he tangled up the old man. That's right."

And the speaker emphasized the last assertion with a nod.

"Hozy says he's mighty good help about the place," said Custer. "He can always depend on him ; never slouches anything ; always straight in his habits."

"If the teacher was one of our young fellows here, we'd have give 'im a trotting," spoke up George Dowers.

"Yes, you school kids would do great things," replied Custer in a contemptuous tone.

The next Friday afternoon the teacher put this question to Linc Matson : "What do you want for the use of your sled to-morrow morning ?"

"O, fifty cents. Perhaps thirty-five will do. Depends on how long you are out with it. But what in

Sam Hill can you want of that rig? You haven't looked at a girl for two months."

"I'll go by some woods and perhaps I may find a stick that will make better kindling for the schoolhouse fire."

Matson regarded the speaker with a quizzical look.

"Kindlings?" he said. "And a grove right up here on the hill? Did you think I was born yesterday or only the day before? I'll undertake to put all the kindlings you load into that rig in my coat pocket. O, you can have the sled all right—and my axe, too. Thirty-five cents will do, I reckon. Come around any time in the morning that you please."

The next morning Thornwood was seated in Matson's one-horse sleigh and was skimming over the hills toward the home of John Wirt, the school trustee. During the term he had called there two or three times to secure a needed signature to his monthly order. It was now the close of another four weeks and a new order was in his pocket. But hitherto he had gone to Mr. Wirt's either afoot or on horseback.

The sky was clear, but the air was too cold to permit the snow to soften. Fortune appeared to be on his side, for as he neared the Wirt home, whence a column of coal smoke was rising vertically from the kitchen chimney, he saw Mattie standing by the gate. Her white woolen hood fully concealed her luxuriant black hair. But before the sleigh was abreast of the house, Mattie, who was looking in the opposite direction, began moving toward the door.

"Wait a moment," called the driver.

The sled was soon up to the gate.

"Miss Mattie, what do you say to a sled ride?"

"Why, it is Mr. Thornwood," said Mattie with a smile of recognition. "Yes, I think I can go. Just wait a moment, please."

The girl hurried into the house, but soon reappeared in her wraps. It was so far evident that she did not object to sleigh rides.

"I didn't know you at first when you were coming up the road," said Thornwood's companion. "There are no bells on the harness. I was out here looking to see if Hazel was in sight. There she is now. She was gone longer than we intended her to be."

"How long will your folks let you be gone?" inquired the driver.

"All the morning, if you choose to drive that much. It is Saturday and the kids are all home. Enough there to get dinner without me. You must stop and have dinner with us as you come back."

"All right then. Thanks. But which way shall we go? Through the glades or over into Hacklebarney?"

"Let's go over through Hacklebarney, Mr. Thornwood. That would be such a lovely ride. We have plenty of time to go round to Long Hollow and on to Herring's store and back."

"You know the way from here?"

"Yes indeed."

"That suits me very well myself. I've been through Long Hollow only when I went to Edley's and back. I believe Long Hollow and Hacklebarney are all pretty much the same."

"I don't know," said Mattie. "You can't get nobody to 'fess up that he lives in Hacklebarney. It's just the other side of him or he's just the other side of it. But see them two trees way over on yon point

to the right of Kingwood?"

"Yes, they seem to show up from any direction."

"There used to be a woman named Phoebe lived up there. She would get into a racket with her man sometimes and scold him right smart, and people got to calling the point Mount Phoebe."

The next Friday afternoon Matson was again asked for his sled.

"Don't you need a lantern too?" inquired the man.

"Why, no, I think not. There's a good moon and it looks as though it would be a clear evening."

"But then you'll need a lantern to get a better sight at the kindling wood along the road. Mattie could hold the lantern while you look."

"Don't you think you have a fine gag on me?"

"You bet. First class. Think I'll have to write it up for the county papers."

As Thornwood was passing the post-office on the last day of the public term, he encountered Matson, whose face wore a studiously sedate expression.

"Your term is out now," said the man. "You may want something to do. Let's go into partnership. I'll furnish all the sleds, axes, and lanterns that we may need. I think there's a big opening in the kindling wood business—"

Thornwood made a pretense of picking up a club and Matson dodged into the store.

## XIV

### Tumbling Down the Ladder

> The best laid schemes o' mice an' men
> Gang aft a-gley.—*Burns.*

The village school closed on a Friday. At the supper hour Mr. Neil came in from a trip to the post-office and handed his employee two letters. The teacher waited until he was alone before reading them. One was from his father, the other from George Reger, with whom he had kept up a regular correspondence. Contrary to his usual impulse, Thornwood opened the last letter first. It read in part as follows:

"You will remember I spoke at the institute about your coming over to this side of the river and teaching a summer normal at Bruceton. But, as I wrote not so long ago, Ridley concluded to teach again this season. However, he is out of the race after all. He told me a few hours ago that he had fully decided not to teach, because his farm interests are in such shape that he would have to neglect them very materially. There seems to be no one else over here who will step into the breach. But we need the school and it ought not to go by default. Unlike the most of us teachers, you have no regular home and you are not definitely located where you now are. We hear favorable reports of your work in the Gladetown school and I am sure our people would like to have you here with us. If you decide to try your fortune on this side of the Cheat near your maternal home, it would be best to come over as soon

as convenient and make sure of the opening. I shall be at Bruceton Tuesday, in the middle of the day, and would be pleased to see you there. I shall do all I can to aid you."

After reading the letter Thornwood held it in his hand several moments.

"I'll do that very thing," he said to himself, as he took up the second missive.

Before he had finished the reading, his face grew stern and pale. After his eyes had traveled to the foot of the page, he stared vacantly through the window until he heard Neil's hand on the door knob. Suddenly rousing himself, he stuffed both hands into his pocket and hurried out of the house to do his evening chores. He attended to them in a rather mechanical way, for his thoughts kept running on the unwelcome message. He went to his room earlier than usual, and did not light his lamp, but sat in a rocker, with his feet in another chair, holding a debate with himself until after his customary hour for retiring.

"This is how the matter stands," he soliloquized. "I have been in this state just one year. I have been well housed and well fed. I have not had a day's sickness. I have made friends and got along very pleasantly. I have not been on expense, except while attending institute. I have had more or less to do right along from the very first. I have worked in the woods, on the farm, have carpentered. I have taught five months of public school and added one month of subscription school. I have earned over three hundred dollars, counting in the board I have made. This is a small pile, compared to what some other people are able to make, but I have saved up

nearly all the clear money I have earned. So looking the matter all over, I think I might call my year a success. Thus far, my decision to come here has turned out favorably. Until I got this letter, I was in a fair way to accomplish what I undertook to do at the time I left home. By another year I could have started a home of my own and had an assured foothold in the world. H'm,"—and here Emma's face floated before his mental vision,—"there's one exception to the general run of good fortune. I've met the first girl I really loved—but I must quit thinking of her—I suppose."

It was some moments before he could bring back his thoughts to the channel whence they had been diverted.

"Now here's this letter," he exclaimed, "Here comes father with a lot of surety money to pay unexpectedly, and no ready resource to meet it with. And only a few days to meet it in. Surety, surety! How some men will get scorched by going surety. I know what it means in this case. It will cripple the folks very seriously to raise so much as that at this moment. But how is it with me? It will sweep away everything I have made this year. And not only that, but it will take up all the reserve I have laid aside. It will bring me down to bedrock—yes, bedrock with a vengeance. It means everything to me. The sacrifice was unnecessary. I will have my own back some day—perhaps. Yes, perhaps. It will not come when I most need it, and I shall be expected to wait until everybody else is provided for. The stranger is looked out for first; the relation, last. Well—I shall send the money on.

"But for just one thing—only one—I would stay

here. As the matter stands—or appears to stand—it would be torment. I shall leave Gladetown and try my luck once more. I may not do so well by leaving. I may not find another Neil where I can work out my board.

"I shall not tell people how long I expect to be gone. I shall take my valise and Neil may send my trunk. I'll not say any good-bys particularly, either.

"Now let me see. Is it just the thing to do that? These people have been kind to me, but I don't care to have them know my misfortune. I can't see what good it would do, and if I stay here, people will begin to wonder why it is I make money and yet have nothing.

"When I left Ohio, I resolved I would not go back, unless circumstances there should compel it, until I had demonstrated in my own case that I could make life a success and climb up by my own unaided efforts. And until I had reached that point, I resolved I would not think of trying to win a helpmate. Well, how have I come on? I believe I have more confidence in myself than I had then, and I believe I have more ability to deal with circumstances and take hold on opportunities. Yet when I came, I had a little store of money to fall back upon. I have nothing now. If I recover my lost ground at the end of a year, I shall do unexpectedly well. People here know very little of my personal affairs, past or present,—out of my own mouth,—and I shall keep my own counsel."

But as the young man sat and pondered in his room, lighted only by the dull reflection from the coals in the grate, he began to doubt the correctness

of his own philosophy. These doubts were indeed hazy, and they did not now bring conviction, yet they heralded the coming of a clearer light. In holding to a resolution to rely on his own exertions and keep his own counsel, he had failed to recognize that he was losing that stereoscopic insight into the problems before him which comes from surveying them through the eyes of a friend.

Every one of us who faces the battle of life at all has to fight his own Bunker Hill and Gettysburg. Thornwood was facing his conflict manfully, even though his plan of battle was faulty. Purpose alone is success if it be rightly aimed, and he had gone resolutely to work to discover the purpose for which he was in the world. He had been gaining ground faster than he supposed. But it had scarcely dawned upon him that love of money is one form of the love of self and is selfish in its essence. He was vexed at the thought of giving up his hard-won earnings, and he esteemed them already lost. Yet he had been developing a strength of character and a perception of his inward resources which could not be put out of his reach. He deplored parting with his money, because he still measured success by the thumb rule of dollars and cents. He had set up an almost purely material standard of success, and he had resolved not to rest until he had reached a certain goal. But he now had an object-lesson to illustrate the fact that riches are never certain; that while man may propose, it is God who disposes.

The young man had been greatly elated with his success in finding employment, but in his revulsion of feeling, he made a mistake common to many sensitive minds with whom the battle of life seems to go

sore. He saw disparagement in every word and act. He still believed Emma had liked him, yet he imagined he was spurned because he was poor. And still he did not believe she quite understood him, neither was he any more certain that he understood her. He was somehow conscious that he and the people with whom he was now living did not think the same thoughts. Yet had he grown up in these glades instead of the unlike environment of the Western Reserve, he knew there would have been more community of feeling between him and Emma. Yet for the resolution with which he had chosen to fetter himself, he would scarcely have noticed any stumbling block of this nature. True affection is prone to make light of differences in social environment. It is by no means proof against the barrier of race. Like the instincts of childhood, it is democratic in its nature.

In resolving not to declare his affections until his own ideal of success had been achieved, he had made a resolution he had not consistently kept. His affections had already found a mooring, yet he refused to make sure of his vantage ground.

He would have gained sympathy and encouragement had he taken Emma somewhat into his confidence, instead of interposing a chalk-line between him and her which deceived no one but himself and which caused him to blunder. By shutting himself up like a chrysalis, he repelled the helpfulness of friends of his own sex, and he repelled the helpfulness that was ready to respond to a more frank avowal of his attachment. He had allowed his resolution to become his master rather than his servant.

But as the fleeting months continued to wing their

way into the bosom of time, Thornwood learned to revise his ideal of success. He found that if the road were rugged, the hardships in the way brought clearness of insight and strength of mental muscle. He found that God in His own good time was bringing him into the path for which he was groping. This dark evening was his dawn-day.

He struck a light and read a quotation which he had written on the fly-leaf of a book :

"When from the skies, that wintry gloom enshrouds,
The blossoms fall and flutter round my head.
Methink the spring e'en now his light must shed
O'er heavenly lands that lie beyond the clouds."

The next morning Thornwood went to the county seat and mailed a bank check for the amount asked of him. The letter accompanying the check was exceedingly brief, but after the date for the security payment had elapsed, he yielded to an impulse to express his feelings, and the following is a portion of his letter:

"You asked me to help you out on the Braden note and I have done so. But never ask me to pay another of your surety debts so long as the world lasts. Let this instance suffice once for all. I have myself to look after. I have less than three dollars to my name."

"Jim oughtn't to feel so cross about it," remarked the parent complacently as he read the note. "He is earning enough to live on and won't suffer. He shall see his money again in a few months."

But James did not see his money within a few months. His letters home had been very non-committal in respect to his private affairs. They now became still more so. They also became briefer and less frequent and were addressed only to his mother.

## XV

### Turnimg to a New Field

O, wondrous mystery, that weaves itself
into each tangled life!
Why do we seek to know the wherefore of
each hard and hidden way?—*Anon.*

The day after his trip to Kingwood was Sunday and Thornwood did not visit Gladetown. In one of his restless rambles about the farm he met David Bruce going home from church.

"Mr. Bruce," said Thornwood, "I am going to Bruceton to-morrow afoot. I want to go by the Beaver Hole and I would like some directions."

"All right. Going to leave us, are you?"

"A while. Can't really say how long I shall be gone."

"Then come over with me and stay all night. That will take a chunk out of your walk to-morrow. You will still have a good fifteen miles."

"But there's my grip."

"I'll wait for you."

The valise was already packed. Thornwood had an option of working for Neil throughout the season, but had told him at the breakfast table that he was going to take a trip and might remain away indefinitely. There was now a hurried farewell and the young man hastened across the fields to rejoin his friend.

It was the first Sunday in May. The air felt soft and warm. The time was near when the woods

would be clothed in their garment of emerald. Service trees were already in bloom and the flower buds of the apple were unfolding. Sheep were grazing on the green hillsides, and true to their instincts they sought the higher levels.

"I'll go with you as far as Friendship," said David at the breakfast table. "There's a man on that road I want to see."

They went down a long hill by a circuitous path and came into a road traversing a narrow, wooded creek bottom, in which there was a profusion of laurel. The shallow stream ran purling through its rocky channel in a rapid succession of tiny cascades. The morning sun was not yet peering over the massive elevation on the right. Leaving the creek they went up a long, heavy ascent, and a little beyond the summit they arrived at a white schoolhouse in the forks of a road.

"Whew," puffed Bruce. "Let's rest up a minute. We have risen four hundred and fifty feet since we left the run. That's equal to climbing the Great Pyramid. Wish we had time to go out where we can see the Cooper Rocks. They are some huge boulders near the top of the river hill on the other side. One lies down the hill a little piece as if it had rolled there. It has a broad top and narrow base and is balanced so that it wouldn't take a big force to send it down into the river.

"Henry Clyde, a lawyer over in Kingwood, got up a fake story about that rock and victimized the Pittsburg papers with it. The letter stated that one Sunday during a time of low water, several men and boys went up there and got to work on the rock till it lost balance and went crashing down the hill, snap-

ping trees like pipe-stems. The river bed was the roof of a cave, and it broke a hole in it big enough to engulf a house. It also made a crack clear across the channel and by morning the river was dry for several miles below. People near there were terrified by the rumbling of the water in the cave and were afraid the whole mountain side would break in. So they went to moving away. A false signature was put to the yarn and it was copied all over the United States. One city paper sent down a photographer, and he got as far as Tunnelton before he found the whole thing was a sell. Then he cussed till he made the air blue round him.

"Now, Mr. Thornwood, you follow down this left-hand road till you strike the river. All down hill, but you'll find a long, heavy pull on the other side. If you run short of time, turn out a little and go to Calvin Steepleton's. Tell him I sent you there and you'll find it all right. I wish you a pleasant trip, and when you get back this way come and see us. You know where we live."

The road indicated by Bruce sank quite steadily along the slope of the river hill, and at the end of what Thornwood pronounced the longest two-mile stretch he had ever known, a fairly smooth reach of the ordinarily tempestuous river came into view. The confronting bluffs, indented here and there by deep, narrow ravines, towered to a height of well-nigh a thousand feet, and were clothed in a forest of deciduous wood. A slippery path down a hillside told where logs had been shot into the river. On either bank was a small house and on the exceedingly narrow bottoms were a few sandy fields of meager size. Boulders lay strewn along the river brink, and

THE BEAVER HOLE

Phot'd by C. S. Rexroad

alongside the shore were rafts of telegraph poles. Some logs intended for cross-ties were being made into another raft by two men. In the midstream was a streak of froth drifting with the strong current.

As Thornwood came down the bank, a raftsman noted his valise and sent a shout across the river. It was quickly answered by a boat which was pulled in his direction by the muscular arms of a young woman. A man with his hand bound up stood in the opposite end of the boat.

"It's a gathering on my finger," he said in reply to a question from the passenger. "I can't use my hand to row. Why are all them rafts down there? They're waiting for a June fresh to float 'em on down. Come back here, sir."

The last words were addressed to a whining dog that stood on a boulder near the farther shore.

"He ain't got a bit o' sense," remarked the man. "He's afeard o' the water, that puppy is."

"Which of you is the cashier?" asked Thornwood, producing a five-cent coin and turning to the oarswoman.

"Makes no difference," she replied. "We are all one."

The Cheat divides Preston county somewhat equally, both as to area and population, and the rivalry between the two sides crops out very noticeably in the awarding of political honors.

The day had become warm, and the rays of the sun falling vertically upon the steep southward exposure of the other bluff, were summer-like in their intensity. An hour's climb brought the perspiring traveler to the top of the ascent, after which the road was more uniform, the upgrades and downgrades

nearly striking a balance. When he came into the pike leading from Pisgah to Bruceton he met a man driving alone in a buggy.

"Going Bruceton way?" inquired the driver reining in his team.

"Yes, sir."

"Then climb in with me. I am going there myself. It will save you more'n five miles o' walk. Are you a Prestonian? Don't think I seen you before."

Thornwood proceeded to tell his companion who he was, where he had lived during the year, and what his occupation had been.

"I am going to Bruceton to see about a summer school," he concluded.

"Ridley used to teach the summer normals there, but they tell me he is going to push his other business this season. I'd like to send my daughter to you, but don't see how I can. I've had hard luck."

"May I ask of what sort?"

"House was burnt."

"Save anything?"

"Hardly a thing. It got afire in the night. Something wrong with the flue, I reckon. When we woke up, the fire had such a start that we couldn't put it out, and it wasn't but a little bit before the whole thing had burnt down. We didn't save any clothes except what we had on. Only had time to set just a few things out of the way of the flames. Insurance had just run out. You might call it a total loss. House burnt, clothes burnt, furniture burnt, provisions burnt. And before daylight, too. It would have been lots harder than it was if we didn't have good neighbors. That very morning the help begun

to come in. One person give us one piece of clothing and another give something else, and the first thing we knowed we was clothed as well as before. Then one family sent us a sack of flour, another some butter, and another some jars of fruit, and then we begun to have something to live on. We moved into an old vacant house that is on the farm of the man that joins places with me. It did right well as a makeshift. That very morning this neighbor started out with a subscription paper. The first man he struck was a poor fellow and he wasn't well able to give anything, but he put his name down for some lumber. The next man was well fixed, but we always thought him one of them chaps that will skin a flea for his hide and tallow. But he didn't make no bones. He put his name right down for twenty-five dollars in cash and said if more was needed to call on him. One man would give money and the next would give work—perhaps money and work both. It was too early in the year for farm work to crowd people, and they turned to, them that give work, and in a mighty short time we had a house to go into. It is not up to what the other was and it isn't finished yet, but I don't complain. I am not straightened up yet from the effects of the burn-out, but if one of my neighbors gets so unfortunate as I was, I'll give him a lift if I have to sleep in a corn crib a while. The poor fellow that give me the lumber has just lost a horse and that would have made it mighty hard on him, but it was so I could help raise a fund to get him another one with."

"What do I owe you for this ride?" asked Thornwood, as they were entering Bruceton.

"Nothing at all. Some of these times I may need a favor of you."

Bruceton stands chiefly on the right bank of a considerable stream. Here is quite a breadth of low ground, but on the other side is a bluff rising almost from the water's edge. The number of houses barely exceeds twenty, yet the village is compactly and regularly built and the streets are supplied with shade trees.

"Well, if here isn't the man right now. We were just talking about you."

George Reger appeared in the open entrance of a store. He hastened out to the sidewalk and shook hands most cordially. Behind him appeared the smiling features of the more undemonstrative Maurer.

"Let's sit down on this bench by these hitching posts," continued Reger. "It's a very handy place for loafers, whatever name it goes by. Did you ride very far with McPerry?"

"Over five miles."

"That was good luck. You got over in good season. Here, let me make you acquainted with Dr. Warner. Dr. Warner, this is Mr. Thornwood, who has been teaching the Gladetown school. He is a Prestonian—a native of Grant—and has come over to see about getting up a summer school."

Dr. Warner was passing down the sidewalk. He was a spare, intellectual-looking man of middle age, and he wore a short, grayish beard.

"Glad to meet you," replied the doctor. "We have heard very favorable accounts of you and your work at Gladetown. I shall be pleased to aid you in any way I can."

"Dr. Warner is one of our leading citizens," pursued Reger. "There isn't a better read physician in the county. Then he's been in the legislature, and used to be on the board of examiners in our district. He takes a great interest in our schools."

A portly, white-bearded gentleman, minus a coat and wearing an apron, had stepped out from a harness shop and stood surveying the little group through his spectacles.

"Why, here is Squire Caldwell," exclaimed Reger. "I want you to know him. Squire Caldwell, this is Mr. Thornwood, who is to teach here this summer. I got well acquainted with him at last institute."

"We'll treat you right, over here," was the kindly remark. "I hope you'll have a good school and do well at it. George says you are a Prestonian. Was Perry Thornwood your father?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then I have you now. I remember him very well, though he wasn't in our country so very long. I know your mother's people. They are Elwoods. They're a good bit scattered by this time. You won't find one of them very close around here any more."

The group was now swelled by the addition of a short, stout man, who was in working clothes and wore a broad-brimmed straw hat.

"Ridley's my name," he said. "Glad to see you here, Mr. Thornwood. I remember you at the institute. I have too much on my hands to permit me to teach this summer. If I can be any help to you in getting up a school, I'm at your service."

The short man clapped his hand on Thornwood's shoulder and then hurried up the street.

"You'll find it all right about the school," declared Reger. "You can begin next Monday, if you wish, but you will want to see personally those who are likely to come. Several are close by, and others live off some piece. You can get around to them all during the week. I will give you what directions you need and will map out a route. Maurer is going to attend."

"And you will find two or three other institute fellows in the crowd," added Maurer. "It may pay you as well by the month as a winter school. I hope so, at least."

"And now we'll find you some dinner," said George Reger. "It is almost noon."

## XVI

### Incidents In a Canvassing Tour

He that would have a cake out of the wheat
must tarry the grinding.—*Shakspere.*

A canvass of the village and the immediate neighborhood yielded fairly good results, and on Wednesday morning Thornwood set out on a more extended tour.

His first objective was a white farmhouse lying some distance from a road and soonest reached therefrom by a footpath. Two knocks at the front door failed to arouse anyone and the blue window curtains were drawn down. Going around a corner of the house in search of a side entrance, he encountered a snarling dog.

"Get away there," came the sharp sound of a woman's voice. "The fiste won't bite if you make up with her, but she's right hateful sometimes."

The woman, who was of middle age, was standing on a small porch. A harmless looking man with dark, closely cropped hair and beard, came out of the open door and looked on in silence. A much younger man came up the path from the stable and gave the dog a kick. After a little preliminary talk, Thornwood announced his errand.

"Sarah May is not home this morning," replied the woman, who was evidently the ruler of the house. "I couldn't spare her away nohow. Times is hard and I don't see how I could pay the bills."

"But she might make a teacher and earn more than she could now."

"But fust thing she'd get married off and I wouldn't get nothing back for sending her to school."

"Your niece that lives near Bruceton is going to attend."

"Her pappy milks a cow that never goes dry," was the sententious response.

"Gets a pension then?"

"Seventeen a month. He can stand it to send her. What politics are you?"

"That's nothin' to do with his teachin,'" objected the husband, opening his mouth for the first time.

The solicitor agreed with him and simply for this reason he made the evasive reply: "I'm rather independent in my political views."

"Why, you are good Lord and good devil," commented the wife. "O, we couldn't send Sarah May. There's too much work here for me."

Finding the prospect hopeless, Thornwood soon took his leave, discerning that the thrifty owners of the good farm viewed educational matters through the big end of a spy-glass.

The canvasser now turned from his course to look at the place of his birth. Directions for finding the dwelling had been given him by Mr. Caldwell. It proved to be a little log house, built with unusual care, as was evident from the regularity of the walls. At the rear side was a frame leanto and in front was a porch, whose turned posts gave Thornwood the correct surmise that this feature of the house did not exist during the occupancy of his parents. The same was also true of the tin roof. The rather indifferent housekeeper gave a pleased look when

Thornwood explained his desire to see the interior of the home, and she readily complied.

"I've heard tell o' your people," she said, as Thornwood was about to depart. "I never knowed none of 'em. We come here six year ago. Better stay and take dinner. It would be intristing to eat where yer pappy and mammy used t' live."

"I thank you very much for your very kind invitation, but it is too long till noon and I have a lot of business to attend to."

"Well, come again, any time that suits y'. Yer welcome."

His next visit was to a large house, remote from a highway and lying in a glade-like depression. Inside the yard was a large dog, growling fiercely and tugging at his chain as though possessed with an overpowering desire to test the strength of the man's clothing. A platform of flat stones extended from the gate to a side porch. It seemed as though no other approach was ordinarily in use. A stout, black-haired girl came from her wash-tub in a steaming room to learn what was wanted.

"Want to see Mrs. Lapsley? Come in this way."

The girl stepped out on the porch and opened the door of the sitting-room, a large and somewhat disorderly apartment, where the canvasser found a woman spinning wool. There were four children in the room and the face of the oldest was as liberally spotted as a double-six domino.

"Henry there, he's catched the chicken-pox somewhere," explained the woman. "But I don't know where he could have went to get it."

Thornwood remembered that he had never been

blessed with the chicken-pox. But it was now too late to retreat.

"I'd like for to send my oldest boy to you," said Mrs. Lapsley. "But this is a rented place and it takes so much to keep it up. The fences is no good and the stock breaks through every little while. My man is out now shearing sheep. You might see him. I'd like for the boy to have more schooling, but its tejus to find the money for it."

When Thornwood arose he moved toward the front entrance.

"This way, if you please," exclaimed the woman in a very serious tone, as she ran to open the door through which Thornwood had entered the room. "You might want to come here again."

"Then you want me to go out the way I came in?" asked Thornwood.

"Why, yes indeed. Any other way would be bad luck."

As the canvasser stepped out on the porch, the black-haired girl pressed her face against the glass to get a look at him.

On passing through the barnyard he was hailed by a youth coming his way with a farm sled.

"Might as well get on and ride," said the youth. I'm going down where pap is shearing."

It was well for the stranger that he complied. The driver was the son of whom the mother had expressed her solicitude, and during the ride Thornwood secured an ally with whom he overcame the objections made by the farmer, as he was shearing a sheep and likewise skinning it by piecemeal.

"You see I can get out of doing some of the work,"

observed the boy with a smile, after his father had given consent.

Another point of visitation was a weather-beaten house lying in a hollow. The front door was open and a large girl was scrubbing the floor of the barn-like interior.

"Come in, if you can get in," was her salutation. "We're just moving in and we ain't half fixed up yet. Pap's out in the other room."

She ushered Thornwood into the kitchen and a few moments later she came into the room herself to overhear the conversation between the caller and her talkative parent.

"Yes, indeed," said the man after Thornwood made out to put an extinguisher on his talk about the weather, the crops, and the political outlook. "I believe in education. We're just setting up house again and there's only three of us, but I don't mean for Jessie to go without some good schooling. She may miss the first few days, but she'll go. I'd ask you to stay to dinner, but fact is, we've brought nothing over yet, and I don't like to insult a fellow that way. But come round here again and see us and stop with us."

The man followed the teacher into the middle of the road.

"Come back here again," he exclaimed. "You're welcome any time and it won't cost you a cent. And if you have a horse, I'll take care of that, too. Come out and stay over Sunday some time. What I have is just as free as the air. Now you better go see Wilbern. He has three girls that ought to go. He lives up on yon hill. Just follow this fence up to

that point in the woods and you'll see a path going right on down "

Thornwood did not feel very sure as to the depth of the man's florid invitation, and it did not surprise him that he never saw the daughter at his school.

As the solicitor was going down the path of which the man had spoken, he met a dark-bearded farmer hurrying forward and industriously puffing at a pipe. He was visibly startled when Thornwood spoke.

"Kind o' s'prised me," was his observation. "Did'n see y' till I got close on to y'. Yes, my name is Wilbern."

"Well," he replied to Thornwood's announcement of his business, "I think we'll send Jennie. She's the oldest o' my girls. But you better go on up to the house. I'll be back in just a little bit and talk with y'."

Seeing that Wilbern was in a hurry Thornwood walked on to the house, where he saw through the open entrance a woman and three girls sitting around a table. A young man was leaning against the doorway.

"Come in and take this cheer," said the son.

As the father was soon to return, the stranger made no haste to introduce his errand. When the females were done eating, the visitor was asked by the wife to take a place at the table, and he then noticed that a clean plate with knife and fork had quietly been put there for his use. A half grown boy came and leaned on the other end of the table, resting his face on his hands. He watched the stranger's every motion while the latter ate his dinner.

With the people he had come to live among, Thornwood had found it seldom expedient to press a matter

of business to a speedy conclusion. The head of the family was rarely in a hurry when at leisure. He would want to talk a while on general topics, and if it were near meal time he would expect the visitor to dine. This made it hard to cover much ground in a day, but on the other hand it gave opportunity for mutual acquaintance that might be to the advantage of all the parties concerned. So it was a full half hour after Wilbern's return before the visitor knew the result of his errand.

"What do you say, Jennie, to going to school to this gentleman over at Bruceton?" asked the farmer.

"O, I don't care. Just as soon go."

"What do you think about it, mother?"

"Just as you and she says."

Wilbern puffed at his pipe a few more minutes and then turned to the canvasser and spoke in a more decided tone.

"I don't care to send her. No use in your tromping over the country and running through the brush for nothing."

For a moment the teacher was puzzled to know whether he had succeeded or failed. The two statements of the farmer did not appear to harmonize. But on venturing a question, he was given an answer that was not ambiguous, and he then went on his way rejoicing.

A further object of Thornwood's quest was a man found sitting on a log at a sawmill. His jaws were exceedingly busy in reducing plug tobacco to a liquid form. When Thornwood came to announcing his errand the man assumed a tone of careless indifference.

"O, I don't know," he remarked as he stared

vacantly into the distance. "Our schools cost us too much as it is for all the good we get out of 'em, let alone sending to a pay school. Times is too hard for a poor man to make anything. I was up in Terr' Alty the other day and they axed me eighteen cents for coffee—five pound for ninety cents. That was too extremious. I told the man I'd give him eighty-five. 'No,' says he, 'that's the very least we can sell it.' I knowed they had a combine. I told him I could send off and get it for sixteen. 'No,' said he, 'couldn't sell it any lower'n eighteen nohow.' I hung onto him I bet 'twas a whole hour. He held onto the ninety cent business, but finely he offered to throw in two cakes of soap. I said no, he'd got to throw in three and he done it, too."

Leaving this prosperous dollar-chaser without scoring a success, Thornwood had now a considerable distance to go. On the hill tops he observed the somewhat frequent occurrence of the private cemetery, a characteristic feature of this mountain land. It was easily recognized, even though the white headstone was not always present. It was usually a very small inclosure, sometimes containing evergreens as well as briars. In occasional instances the fencing had disappeared. Cattle and sheep could then trample at will on the resting places of earlier residents, who were now, perchance, quite forgotten.

Another relic of an earlier day was the ruin of an iron furnace in a low, neglected field. It was but one of several which had flourished before the coming of the railroad, but which could not now hold their own in default of this means of a ready outlet. For

near half a century the stone structure had slowly been yielding to the tooth of time.

Thornwood came at length to a secluded hollow containing three humble homes. He found it necessary to inquire at the nearest in order to be sure of his route. A tow-headed boy, taken by surprise at his approach, fled with a yell of alarm into a place of concealment, but a somewhat larger companion, who wore a piece of leather round his body to supplement his scanty clothing, was unterrified. The canvasser did not enter the house, but from what he could see on a close approach, it appeared as cheerless and begrimed as an empty coal shed.

"You go up th-th-that-a-way," said the boy, indicating the nearest house. "That's S-Sol Mack l-lives tha'. Pap's s-sick."

But at the next house the way still appeared uncertain and Thornwood knocked on the door

"Come in," said the young woman who answered the call.

"I want to find—" began the canvasser.

"Pap's right in this-a-way," she replied, moving toward an inner door.

Seeing he would have to go in to find out what he needed to learn, Thornwood went to the door of the room and there beheld a man, clothed but lying on his back on a cot. He was asleep and the appearance was very suggestive of a corpse laid out for burial.

"What is the matter with him?" inquired the caller.

"Broke his leg."

"Why, I have no occasion to disturb him. I only wanted to get put on the way to Bear's."

"Just take up through the field to the house above

this yer, and you'll see a lane that will bring you out on the county road. Then take to your left. Bear's is the first house."

But when he had reached the first of the houses spoken of, a thunder-cloud, developed by the heat of the day, was about to let loose its contents, and he knocked on the door to find shelter.

"You better get away from there," came the high-keyed voice of a girl. "Teakettle's bilin'. I'll scald you right. You needn' come rippin' tearin' round yere. I'll loosen the hide on y'—loosen it right, too."

Thornwood decided if he were bound to get wet, he would prefer water from the clouds to the contents of a hot teakettle. He was looking for a shed to get into, when the door cautiously opened and the head of a woman came into view.

"Why, hit's a stranger. Won't you come in? Dessie here thought hit was Phil Kippen come to play a prank on 'er."

The danger having vanished, Thornwood passed into the house, but the girl had retreated to another room and remained invisible.

"What ails the man that lives in the first house?" inquired the solicitor.

"Huh," scoffed the woman as she dipped her forefinger into her snuff can; "hit's nothin' much but the Old Boy got holt of 'im. He kin git up and beat 'is woman and run them kids o' his'n over the house."

Before the rain abated the woman again put her finger into the snuff box, and without going to the trouble of washing her hands, she began to make

bread. When he arose to leave, Thornwood made some further inquiry as to his route.

"You want to go from Bears's on over to Lije Burnley's? Why, hit's not so fur from yere. Lije lives on another road. You go out past Bears's barn and go on up the hill to a gate you'll see from the barn, and then you take through the next field and bear to your right, and that'll bring you out to Lee Spears's and they'll put you on from there. You can't miss hit. You jest go catacornered-like through the field beyant the gate. Plain path all the way."

Following these directions, after leaving Bear's, Thornwood went through a gate made to balance by means of a weighting of rock adjusted to the outer end of the heavy top beam. A small white house lay in a hollow beyond. At the open door was a child too young to answer his questions. A bright-eyed girl of ten years soon came forward and the caller turned to her.

"That's Allie," said the younger child.

"Won't you come in?" inquired the sister.

"Not now, I think. Will you please tell me the way to Mr. Burnley's?"

"Lije Burnley's? Yes'ndeed. I'll go with you a piece so you can find the way. We're keeping the house. Pap and mammy is over on the other place. Do you want to go, Minna? We'll take the kids and we can all go up."

The two older girls came out, each carrying a younger child.

"This doesn't look right," objected Thornwood. "These little fellows are rather heavy for you to carry. Can't you tell me the way, so I can find it?"

"O, we are used to it," said Allie. "You might

not get started right till you get out on yon side the orchard."

"Then let me carry them if they are willing."

"You might take this kid, but the least one is afeard o' strangers."

Thornwood took up the white man's burden and the procession wended its way through the farmyard to the farther side of an orchard.

"There," said the accommodating guide; "you go 'cross that glady place to yon rail fence. Then you keep down on yon side till you come to a dreen, and then you'll see a path bearing to your left through the woods. That will bring you out to a wheat field. There's a path goes through it catacornered-like. You'll see the house. You can't miss it. It's right that way from here," continued the girl pointing with her finger.

Thornwood was now somewhat used to finding his way by means of by-paths and short cuts, and he had slight difficulty in gaining the white residence of Elijah Burnley. The day was now spent and another shower came on.

"Where will this gentleman sleep?" asked the man of the house at the close of a political discussion. "I'm tired with my drive and think I'll go to bed."

Thornwood had expected to go a little farther, but he was willing to remain, inasmuch as the house was attractive without and inviting within, even if the talkative proprietor did sometimes spit on the carpet.

"So you are going to teach a summer normal at Bruceton," observed Burnley after he had shown the guest to a bed and while he continued to lean on the rail at the head of the stairway. "I have a daughter

that's not here just now, and I've a de'il of a notion to send her. She wants to go to school, but fact is, I hadn't been thinking much about it."

The next morning Thornwood stopped at a house for a drink of water. The door was open and just within was a woman sewing. A man lay on a lounge apparently asleep. Before the stranger could make known his want, the woman went to the lounge and rolled the man from side to side as though she were kneading a mass of dough.

"Wake up, old man," she said. "Somebody here wants to see you."

The slumberer got into an upright position and rubbed his eyes, after which he surveyed the caller.

" 'Pears like I've saw you some place," he remarked. "What's your name?"

"Thornwood. I came in for a drink of water."

"I've heard of you," affirmed the man of the house.

"Never heard any good of me, did you?" suggested the canvasser.

"Don't know that I have," replied the man, who added after a pause: "Nor any ill, either. But come in and rest up a while. Ash, bring us in some fresh water."

A young man presently came in with a pitcher and a glass.

"Why," said the water carrier, "ain't you the fellow that kept school over at Gladetown?"

"The very one."

"I seen you over there," continued the young man. "This is my sister. We was raised on yon side the river."

"Yes," added the man of the house, "that's how I

come to hear of you. My head is feeling bad to-day and I was laying down."

"These Brickley's are light-headed," observed the brother-in-law.

"Yes, empty-headed and not much sense," agreed the husband.

"How do you and Emma get along?" asked Mrs. Brickley after the group had been chatting some moments.

"Emma who?"

"O, I think you know all right. Why, Emma Brandon, of course."

"How did you folks learn so much over here?"

"One shouldn't tell tales out of school," laughed the woman.

"She's a dandy little girl," exclaimed Brickley, who had resumed his place on the lounge. "I seen her once to my cousin's when she was keeping house for him. She knowed where and how to take hold of the work just as if she always belonged there. She kept things up just right, too."

Thornwood liked to hear these words of praise, even though they scarified his sensibilities.

Continuing his course toward the river hills, he saw an occasional spot which told where lime had been burnt for the purpose of a fertilizer.

At the crossing of a stream there was a fork in the road. Choosing the way that he thought was the one he needed to take, he crossed a plank spanning a little run and found the road steadily rising. Knowing by this that he was wrong, he sought to remedy his mistake by quitting the highway and going at once in what he judged to be the direction of the other road. This brought him upon a rise

from which he could find nothing that appeared like a recognizable landmark. He descended into a hollow toward a house where he judged he would find some one to set him right, but the house proved to be one of the many vacant tenements which occur amid this network of hills. Going beyond into a wood, his troubles increased. Logs in all stages of rottenness lay in the way, but these did not swerve him from his course so much as the almost impenetrable thicket of laurel found at the bottom of a large ravine. He was lured farther and farther away in the hope of finding an opening through the tangle. Dim paths wound tortuously through the hollow, the ease of following them adding yet more to the difficulty of holding a given direction. Several times there came the deceptive appearance of open ground in the near distance, but this was always due to a lowness of the horizon. The rotting, briar-encumbered remains of a wooden tramway were at length found, and by following this trail Thornwood came back to the very plank he had crossed in leaving the forks of the road.

He soon made another mistake in these labarynthine hills. He was to leave the main road at a given point, and thinking he had found the right path, he chose one which curved persistently toward the Cheat and brought him to a field near the brink of the river hill. Here was a house and he determined to inquire.

The old dwelling was of logs and the walls did not stand true. The ends of the logs were not squared and the chinks were filled in with mud and pieces of wood. The topmost layer of shingles projected beyond the crest of the roof. The external chimney

was built of rough stone. One window contained two lights. Another had more, originally, but a mass of red rags took the place of one missing pane and a sheet of coarse paper was tacked against another. The end, hanging down and flapping in the breeze, partially covered a third vacant place. Inside could be seen a faded red curtain. There was a white pine in the dooryard, but neither flowers nor shrub, nor scarce a vestige of grass. The grounds were littered with such objects as a chopping block, an ash heap, an empty barrel and a wash-kettle. Pigs roamed about in freedom and were just now wallowing in the mud near the door of the springhouse.

Three small boys with dirty faces and still dirtier clothes were sitting on the porch near the sagging door, and in the garden, which lay very close to the house, a woman was hoeing. Three strapping girls in reddish dresses were planting corn in a field beyond. All were barefoot.

"Who lives here?" asked Thornwood, by way of introducing his business.

The woman looked up and an inquiring smile developed on her features. The stranger repeated his question.

"Wesley Billinger," she replied. "He's on yon side the house making a bee frame."

"Good morning, sir," exclaimed Billinger as Thornwood stood before him. "Did you think you'd got to the jumping-off place?"

"I don't know as to that, but I seem to be out of my way," replied the stranger, who then related his perplexities of the morning.

"'Pears like you done some useless travel," re-

marked Billinger with a broad smile. "This yer road tuk y' clare out o' the way. And then you double tripped it a right smart piece down by that old mill-set. I kin put y' on to the big road easy 'nough, but y' luk tired. Wonderful long hill y' come up. Stay to dinner and rest y' face and hands."

Thornwood consulted his timepiece. It was after eleven o'clock. He was tired and his appetite was rising. It would have risen faster had the appearance of the house been more inviting. But the man's invitation bore every mark of self-respect, as well as sincerity. Thornwood followed him to the porch and the farmer drew a mutilated rocker through the doorway.

"Jake," said the father to the oldest boy, "go to the spring and get some water out of the northwest corner. Go get a cup, Ray,—in there by the chimbly."

While the largest boy was coming from the spring with a small tin pail, the smallest one brought a glass from the kitchen. The three urchins, in whose ages there was little difference, then stood immediately in front of the stranger, forming an alignment equal to the precision of a military parade. They surveyed him in silence, grinning whenever he spoke to them. A still smaller child brought a handful of onion leaves from the garden and fed them to a pet gosling, which hurried one tidbit after another down its shovel bill, the capacity of its craw seeming to have no limit.

"The growed-up boys," said Billinger, "is putting in corn on the other place beyant where them girls is on the batter. I sold hit one time, but had t' take

hit back agin. The feller was doin' no good—he's too triflin'. He got t' drinkin' and went all t' sticks after he done me a heap o' dirt. He's the beetingest fellow round h'yer I ever knowed. I tuk the place off'n his hands. He boogered the ground all up and there's a powerful sight o' sprouts t' trim out. O, Lib."

"Whooh," came the shrill response from the woman in the garden.

"Better start dinner goin', hadn't y'?"

"Be there in a minute," was the reply. "Look a there, Tishy," she shouted, turning to the girls in the cornfield. "What the Sam Hill y' doin'. Don't y' see that caff tromping over yer corn sack? Go ketch 'im an' put 'im in the lot. Where yer eyes gone t'?"

The housewife presently came out of the garden and dispersed the military squad that was studying Thornwood's clothes and physiognomy.

"John, go get some wood. Go quick. Time fer dinner now. Ray, go pull some onions'n roobub. And Jake, go in the spring house an' fetch out that little tin bucket. Don't be afeard. No rats in there an' no boogers, nuther."

Meanwhile the talkative Mr. Billinger was entertaining his guest.

"Come dogged near los'n that caff," said he. "Hit fell into a hole and when I found hit, it seemed to be in the manner dead, hit got so weak. But we brung him round all right. Come from over yon side o' Friendship, did y'? See that barn yon side the river? Hit's right close t' Friendship. Luks like y' cud throw a rock from here acrost. Right sharp of a hill down here to the river. I don't go

down noways often. I used to fish off'ner'n I do now."

The odor of coffee and bacon had been some time in evidence when the mother requested the oldest boy to ring the farm bell. A few moments later she came out on the porch and looked impatiently in the direction of the toilers in the corn field.

"Hullo there, Tishy and the rest o' y'. Gee whizz. I want yeh in h'yer now to be ready for dinner. D'y' hear? Ante up now."

An affirmative response floated across the field, and a few moments later the girls, in their sunbonnets and loose dresses, came filing into the house, whence the clatter of dishes was presently heard.

"There comes the boys," observed Billinger, as three figures appeared on the hilltop above the house. "What kin Am be whis'lin?' Don't think he knows hisself."

The meal proved neither ill-cooked nor repellant.

"Now jest help yourself," said Billinger. "We don't have no style here and not much manners."

"No big family, you see," remarked Mrs. Billinger. "Only twelve. We lost the two that come next to them little kids. Have more milk? Callie, fill 'is glass up agin. Take off more bread. You are not making out any dinner. I don't like to see anybody skimp hisself. Lury, you ain't got over that cold yit. Big family like our'n, there is most always some one ailin'. John nearly got his thumb cut off t'other day."

Near the close of the afternoon Thornwood found himself near the home of Calvin Steepleton, to whom he had been recommended by Bruce. This man was one of those the canvasser wished to see and he also

expected to lodge with him. A drizzling rain had set in and his clothes became wet by contact with the grass and bushes through which he had to go.

The home of Mr. Steepleton was a low, old-time structure, to which additions had been built.

"I'll come in and dry off if you don't mind," said the wayfarer, presenting himself at the door of the kitchen.

"Why yes, come in. Take a seat here by the fire," said the woman, who was the sole occupant of the kitchen.

Thornwood removed his wet shoes and crouched close to the stove, turning himself about from time to time. after the manner of roasting an ear of corn over live coals.

An old man soon came from the farmyard.

"This is my father," said Mrs. Steepleton by way of introduction.

"How old would you say I am ?" inquired the parent after he had been entertaining the guest for a while.

Thornwood looked at the almost black beard of the old gentleman and made a wild guess.

"Eighty-three," corrected the patriarch. "I kin do a right fair day's work yit. You kin pick up quite a bunch of old people in these hills."

The supper table was presently set and the proprietor of the place came in.

"Why, how are you, stranger," was his hearty greeting. "Got caught out in the wet, did y' ?"

"Yes, and I thought I would see if you could put up a tramp. David Bruce over at Gladetown told me to look you up."

"So you know David ?" exclaimed Steepleton, his

eyes brightening. "A right clever fellow he is. Why yes, it's all right for you to stay. I never turn nobody off."

A little further exchange of talk put the two men on terms of full acquaintanceship.

"Supper's ready," announced Mrs. Steepleton at length.

"Do you eat?" inquired the host placing his hands on the arms of his rocker, leaning forward in readiness to rise, and looking toward the stranger.

"O, once in a while," replied Thornwood.

"Come on," said the farmer leading the way to a well spread table.

The younger members of the family drank milk from quart bowls.

"They're all caffs," explained Steepleton. "They never was weaned. Them bowls saves a power of running to the milk pitcher. And I reckon you don't find your'n too big after tromping round all day."

On arising from the table the farmer rather suddenly went into the sitting-room.

"Go on in, Thornwood," said the wife. "You kin go in there and gas. He didn't think about you."

"That's right," declared Steepleton. "Come on in. Make yourself at home. If you's to be along here Sunday you'd see a big crowd down here on the run. There's to be a baptizing—three—no, four, I reckon it is. Better gather up and come over. Are you a married man?"

"No, I live in single blessedness."

"Or single misery, which? Then you better not go to any parties over by the Black schoolhouse this winter."

"What's the difficulty in the way?"

"Why, the young people over about there are great on kissing parties and you might get drawed in. Ghosts over there, too. They tell of a man that's seen by a little bridge at night and he don't have no head."

"Then he can't have any brains," interposed Thornwood.

"That isn't all yet," said the farmer. "Out on the Wymp's Gap road they tell of a man that's seen in a fence corner and he has a pig's head on him. I used to couldn't believe such things at all, but I know truthful fellows who declare right up and down they've saw them."

"Come out and see us again," said Steepleton when Thornwood took his leave in the morning. "And bring your girl along next time."

## XVII

### A New Face Appears on the Scene

> Friendship often ends in love, but love in friendship never.—*Colton.*

Thornwood made a flying trip to Kingwood on Saturday, and among the few familiar faces he saw was that of Joe Black, the editor of the Plaindealer. He was standing on the sidewalk in front of his office.

"Why, hello, old boy!" was his greeting. "What's the good word? My Gladetown correspondent tells me you went over the river on a visit."

"Yes, and it may be a long one. I am to begin a summer term at Bruceton on Monday."

"Good for you. Will it pay you well?"

"That remains to be seen. I shall do reasonably well, I think. How's the Painkiller coming on?"

"The same old gait. But say, Thornwood, why not send in correspondence from Bruceton? We need some one at that place, and I'll put your name on our list and send you the paper. It is your old home down that way, so you once told me, and it will help to make you better acquainted. The members of your school can do something toward furnishing news."

"All right. I'll try it."

"I'll go inside in a moment and get you some paper and some printed envelopes. But what will you do when your school is out?"

"Don't know yet. There will be three months to provide for in some way."

"Then when you are not doing anything, it draws blood?"

"Emphatically so. I can't afford any vacant time when I can help it."

Joe Black looked into the street in silence for some moments, and when the conversation was resumed it was in another channel. Thornwood wondered whether Black asked these questions out of mere curiosity or whether he had some definite purpose in view.

"Maurer," said Thornwood at the close of the first day of the new term, "where can I get my shoes mended? There seems to be no one to do such work here in the village, and there was no time while I was in Kingwood last week."

"Mr. Emmons is the nearest man I can think of," replied Maurer. "He lives out on the creek. And look here, Mr. Thornwood. A girl stays there who might possibly come to school. Anyway, there's no harm in asking. You inquire for Miss Lucy Beckett. There's no other girl belongs there."

"I'll go right now," replied the teacher. "I need the exercise. The first day of a term is a little more wearing than ordinary ones."

The day was warm and clear, the grass was growing vigorously, and the forest trees were coming rapidly into full leaf, their angular limbs being already veiled by the expanding foliage of pink-green. The Emmons home was found to lie almost in the woods. It stood on a broad, level site, and Thornwood had to pass through two small inclosures before reaching the house. The original building was of logs, but the frame annex was larger in size. A broad, cozy porch, on which was a rustic armchair, lay facing

the road. It was partly screened, however, by three white pines, and by a black gum the limbs of which drooped to the ground and shaded a spring house. Thornwood had no sooner gained the porch than he knew the quality of the housekeeping was good. The secluded home had a restful, inviting look, and it appealed very forcibly to the lonely exile.

Thornwood's knock on the cleat door caused it to be opened by a girl of perhaps eighteen years. She was of medium height, neither stout nor slender, and her face had a wide-awake, intelligent expression. Her pink-checked dress was tidy and worn in good taste, and her ruffled collar was unsoiled.

"Will you come in?" was her greeting, given with a welcoming smile. Her manner was easy and self-possessed.

The room into which she ushered the caller was low but fairly spacious. The walls were papered and the ceiling painted blue. The floor, where not covered with home-made rugs, was seen to be old and worn, yet clean. There were cupboards on both sides of the broad stone chimney.

"Did you want to see Mr. Emmons?" inquired the girl, going to a window and raising the shade. "He's out in the field, but I can go and call him."

"I don't wish to cause you that trouble unless he should not come in soon. Is this Miss Lucy Beckett?"

"Yes, that is my name," replied the girl, clinching the affirmation with a smile. "Aren't you the gentleman that has come to teach at Bruceton?"

"I am the one. My name is Thornwood and I have been living at Gladetown across the river."

"I thought you must be the teacher. I didn't call to mind that I ever see you round any place. I have heard George Reger speak of you. I've been out Glade Farms way and have just got home."

This mention of his friend made Thornwood feel that he himself was less a stranger in the neighborhood than he had thought.

"I suppose you have hardly quit going to school, Miss Beckett?"

"No, I don't know that I have. I like to go to school right well, but I couldn't go this summer. These people I live with couldn't let me off at present. There is too much work to do. But I'm a great reader. I read everything, most, that I can lay my hands onto. Those of us out here in the country that like to read, don't get hold of too many books and papers to suit us, unless it is in the summer time, when we have the most work. But there comes Mr. Emmons up to the house for something. I'll go call him in."

Lucy then left the room and a few moments later a quiet man entered, who was of above middle age. Like some others of the older men of these hills, he shaved the front of his face and wore a gray fringe-beard.

"Couldn't do your work just this time," he said, after Thornwood had made known his name, occupation and errand. "I don't do anything like regular work any more. Never did, except to mend for neighbors. If you will get some leather out of the store and bring it along, I'll do it some other day. I don't keep no leather by me."

"How would Saturday do?" inquired the caller.

"Right well. Better come in the middle of the day, so I'll be sure to have daylight for it."

Thornwood soon reached for his hat, but somewhat reluctantly.

"Needn't rush off," said Mr. Emmons. "Better stay and have a bite of supper."

The stranger at once concluded that he would not rush off. But had he not met Lucy Beckett, he would probably have found some excuse for returning to Bruceton. It was his first day of school and there were details of organization to look into, yet these things could now wait.

Supper was called a little after the usual time for the household. The best table-cloth had been laid and jellies and marmalades had been brought from their hiding-places. Except for Lucy, no one appeared at the table but the farmer and his wife. The visitor observed that the female members of the household did not wait to eat after the men were done.

"Did you ever see one of Elmer Tressler's stereopticon entertainments?" asked Lucy at the supper table.

"No, and I don't think anyone has ever told me of him."

"One of Lucy's admirers," suggested Mr. Emmons.

"Why, Uncle Joe," protested Lucy. "He never even spoke to me. Mr. Thornwood, he's a young man that belongs here in Grant. He and his brother Leonard give a lecture this Saturday evening over at Brandonville for the benefit of the Sunday school. It is on Pilgrim's Progress. I heard him give another il-

lustrated lecture once. That was on the World's Fair at Chicago. It was real good."

"It would have been a very good substitute for seeing the real fair," remarked the teacher.

"Were you at Chicago that time?" asked Lucy.

"No, I did not have that pleasure."

Thornwood noticed—accidentally of course— that on the day of the lecture he was to return to the Emmons home to have his shoes repaired.

The next Saturday noon he was again at the old house, and while the farmer was bending over the last, Thornwood had another chat with the girl.

"Miss Lucy," he said on leaving, "if you have no different arrangements, will you accept my company to the lecture to-night?"

"With pleasure," was the prompt response, accompanied with some change of color.

Profiting by sore experience, the teacher had made some cautious inquiries during the week and ascertained that he would not likely find a rival in his way.

"We are all going, here at this house," said Lucy. "But we would have gone by ourselves."

It was not far to Brandonville and twilight was hardly gone when Lucy and her escort arrived directly at the brick church; a comparatively large building, erected when the village was more prosperous than now and also more populous. "Pilgrim's Progress," that immortal allegory by the Bedford tinker, was thrown upon canvas in a considerable variety of views, and further illustrated in a parallel lecture by Mr. Tressler.

"That music was a good idea of his," said Thornwood as he and Lucy were going back to her home.

"I mean when he threw a verse of 'America' on the screen. And those pictures of some of our big public buildings gave some variety to the entertainment."

"And still it was right tormenting to me," replied Lucy. "It makes me want to see more. Now over at Mountain Lake Park I am told they have real fine stereopticon lectures about various countries. Miss Rinewald, who lives over in Brandonville, was at the Park summer before last, and was telling me about the lectures on India and Norway. Such big, fine pictures as they had. It was almost as if the real buildings and the people standing round them were right before her. I've been wanting to go to the Park so much. If there was a railroad all the way, I reckon I'd been there before now, but it's eighteen miles to the railroad and that's a long drive over our rough roads. If we didn't read about such things we wouldn't know so much, and then we wouldn't care. But I don't want to be an ignoramus. I'll live in hopes if I have to die in despair."

"May I call some other day?" inquired the escort as he was about to leave the Emmons home.

"Yes, you come back."

So Thornwood did not forget to leave his umbrella.

There was to be a picnic a month later, a few miles from Bruceton, and notwithstanding the empty state of his purse the teacher would have yielded to the temptation to invest in buggy hire; but finding that the whole Emmons household would be present, the impecunious young man thought better of the impulse, and on the morning of the picnic he was about to start off afoot.

"Going up the pike?" inquired a villager whose

name was Conway and who wore a long mustache. "This drummer is going that way."

Conway indicated a young man who was on the point of getting into his buggy.

"I'm going through Brandonville and Clifton," said the stranger. "If you are bound that way, I'd be glad of your company."

"That would take me part of the way, and I will accept your offer," replied Thornwood.

In another moment they were crossing an iron bridge. A little distance above is a dam built to furnish power to a small woolen mill. A thin sheet of water fell over the dam with a dull roar. The rise of the road along the brow of a bluff brought them to a point where they could look down upon the dam and into the slackwater that extends nearly three miles above. The white houses of the little village now looked so huddled together as to suggest a miniature city. Beyond the creek the ground rose far more gradually, though to a considerable height, and on the not distant horizon was a row of arrow-shaped trees standing out like a file of soldiers. They soon reached a smooth, elevated ridge, whence the ragged outline of Chestnut Ridge, marking the western border of the county, rose prominently into view.

"I don't mean to go back on the part of the county where I belong," said the drummer; "but this is a fine district. It is not so broken as some of the others. Here, the valley runs clear across the county. There's a mountain on each side—Chestnut Ridge on the west and Laurel Ridge on the east—and the Big Sandy we just crossed runs half way between. Some of the best farmers in the county live here. You can tell that by the good class of farmhouses. Some of

THE VILLAGE OF BRUCETON Phot'd by C. S. Rexroad

them are quite new. Now we are most into Brandonville. Looks odd to see two towns about of a size and only a mile apart. But Bruceton is much the newer place."

Occupying a high, smooth, and pleasant site, the score of houses, generally large and sometimes of brick or stone, lie massed on a straight thoroughfare, shaded by large trees. But the decrepit appearance of several buildings and the general look of age, were a token that Brandonville had known busier days. It had once ranked almost first among the centres of population in the county, and had been a commercial, educational, and even manufacturing center for a considerable area. But the decline of the near-by National Road, which was built to link more firmly the seaboard of the Union to the great interior, and the diversion of trade to the new arteries created by the iron road, had robbed the town of much of its early importance.

The picnic ground, which lay some distance beyond, was a fine oak grove. A framework of poles supported some boards which were to serve as seats, and the platform was of similar construction. In the rear of the seating space was a rude booth, where ice cream, lemonade, candy, and other articles of like nature were to be dispensed. The booth was not yet open, and it bore the following legend daubed in uneven letters on a white cloth:

"Smallpox here."

Thornwood had made a very early start and only a few young men and boys were yet on the ground. But other accessions were soon in coming, and it was not long before George Reger appeared.

"Glad to see you here," said George. "I hope we

can be favored with a speech from you. I'm booked for one, I believe, but if you speak, that will give me an excuse to shorten mine."

"You must let me off," demurred Thornwood. "I am not the least bit gifted in that line. I never have spoken in public and I shrink from beginning now."

"We'd be pleased to have a talk by a stranger in the settlement," said a man who resembled George so closely that Thornwood knew him to be a brother. "It would be a sort of novelty with us and I am sure our people would appreciate it."

"Mr. Thornwood, let me make you acquainted with my brother Martin," said George Reger, turning to the last speaker.

"George and myself could not come together," remarked Martin Reger. "I am a married man and drove straight here, while George is a moonstruck youth and had to take a roundabout course and bring his own company."

"Here is a speechmaker and we'll press him into service," said George, as a tall, broad-shouldered young man came forward, whom Thornwood recognized as Harry Victor, an institute acquaintance.

George Reger soon drifted to another part of the ground and left the new arrival to entertain his friend.

"I like to look over a crowd and study faces," observed Victor. "I know most of the people, but some are strangers to me. See the crowd of white dresses that are collecting here. A picnic is sure to bring the young folks out in the best clothes they can put on. Here comes the organ in that wagon. Wonder if we hadn't better lend a hand and help get it on the platform."

After the instrument was in place, the friends

again drew back and Victor continued his observations.

"I sometimes think picnics don't come often enough, and they make quite a lot of trouble too. See how the young folks are flocking round the lemonade stand, like flies round a molasses barrel. The lemonade and the ice cream and the tobies will go flying to-day. I think I could make some money, if I could run one one of these stands at a picnic and be at a picnic every day in the summer. People may complain about hard times, but these stands never fail to take in the loose change all the same. See that dark complected, smooth-faced man—a little older than you? That is Jack Gilroy, a fruit-tree agent and a slick talker, too. He is right in his element here, chinning the girls. That small young lady at the end of the stage with the brown eyes and pretty face is Miss Nellie Carman. I think she will play the instrument. It is her cousin that George Reger is with now. That small, spare, clerical looking young man is Rev. Westman. His circuit covers all this side of Sandy Creek. He's an able man and much stouter than he looks to be."

At this moment Daniel Wallace appeared.

"I was taking in the situation here," remarked Wallace. "Mr. Victor was entertaining a stranger and treating him with all due courtesy until some one could relieve him. He wants an opportunity to make himself agreeable to the ladies who are present in such numerous force. So I thought I would come to his rescue."

"I think I am too late for that part of the program now," laughed Victor. "Martin Reger is calling the crowd to order."

"We want all the good singers up here in front," announced the chairman. "There's room for more."

The majority of the picnickers took seats, but several small groups, chiefly of men, remained at a little distance, and there was no lessening of the numbers in front of the lemonade stand. Next to Mr. Westman himself, Daniel Wallace was the chief speaker. George Reger was then called upon, and Elmer Tressler, the stereopticon lecturer, followed him with an off-hand talk.

"Bring on another horse," came from one of the masculine hangers-on at the lemonade booth, as the last speaker took his seat.

At length the hour of noon arrived and the audience began to scatter, the women making rather prompt headway toward the buggies and wagons.

"You seem to be a stranger here. My name is Vandyne. Take dinner with us. It will be ready in a few minutes. Mr. Wallace will be in our crowd. I noticed you and him talking together a while ago."

The speaker was a short man, approaching middle age, and he wore his beard in burnside fashion.

"Thank you, Mr. Vandyne. I will wait by this tree until you are ready."

Martin Reger touched Thornwood's arm.

"Come down to our carriage and take dinner with us," he said.

"I thank you most kindly, but Mr. Vandyne has just asked me."

"That is all right," returned Reger. "By accepting the first offer no one can feel slighted. We had intended to have you join us, but I didn't think to speak about it before the exercises began."

"I knew you had nothing to eat anyhow, and that is why I asked him," declared Vandyne.

Lucy Beckett, whom Thornwood had not seen until then, came passing his way.

"Why, Mr. Thornwood, I didn't know you were here. You will take dinner with us, won't you?"

The teacher was sorry; of course he was: sorry that she did not appear sooner than Vandyne.

"I have been asked to dinner by seven different persons," he soon afterward remarked to a small, reddish-haired man whom he had met in Bruceton.

"Our people are not in the habit of overlooking strangers," was the reply. "I don't say it because I belong in this county, but you will find us very hospitable. But you won't have to go far from here to find things very different. If you will pardon me for referring to your own state, I will tell you something that happened out there. An agent was driving through a country district and it was time to put up for the night. He applied at a house and they wouldn't take him in. It was the same way at several other houses. Then he began to get mad. The next house he came to was quite a fine one. It was growing dark by that time, and he said to himself, he'd get into that house or know why. He went up to the door, knocked, and a man came and opened it. The agent stepped right inside. Said he, 'I'm in and I propose to stay in. I want supper and breakfast and a bed. I have a horse out here and I want him fed and taken care of. And in the morning I will pay you what's right.' The man laughed and told him he guessed he'd been turned off a few times. He took him in and entertained him in good shape."

Daniel Wallace now took Thornwood's arm.

"They sent me up here for you," was his remark. "I am glad you met Vandyne. He taught a good many years and was one of the best teachers in the county."

Wallace led the way to a chestnut tree, under which was a cloth spread on the grass. Mrs. Vandyne and her four fresh-complexioned young daughters had been arranging upon this cloth the contents of a big basket.

As the throng reassembled after dinner, Thornwood chanced upon a man whose face was familiar to him, since he had several times seen it on the street in Bruceton. The gray hair was curly and the roguish countenance was smoothly shaven.

"We ought to know each other," he remarked. "I know who you are. My name is Wedman—Sant Wedman, they call me. Sant is a nickname for Sanford in this country."

"There's a little similarity in our names," replied Thornwood. "My middle name is Winfield. But I am not true to name, since I have not won a field."

"Now you're talking," said the voice of Maurer. "This man is not true to name, either, for he is a man that don't wed."

"I thought the teacher had a far-away look," pursued Wedman, with a twinkle in his eye. "I think he's looking over the crowd for the girl he likes better than himself."

"Sant, why don't you do a little looking on your own account ?" remarked Mr. Westman, the preacher, who halted a moment as he was passing by. "I'll marry you off at a reduced rate, just to get rid of such an old bach. And your friend here can find some good housekeepers among these girls. They

are quite up-to-date. A number of them have worked away from home, over on the Pennsylvania side, and they bring back some ideas with them. Get him interested, Sant, and I'll make you another discount."

"O, the girls don't think nothing of me," replied Wedman. "So I'll try to look out for other people."

"And turn them from the error of their way," suggested Thornwood.

"Don't go to him for advice," exclaimed Maurer. "His preaching is better than his practice."

"That is just why my advice ought to be good," argued the older man. "I'm unselfish about it, you see."

"Don't listen to him, Mr. Thornwood," insisted Maurer. "He's the most incorrigible old bach in this whole country."

## XVIII

### A Mishap

> When any calamity has been suffered, the first thing to be remembered is how much has been escaped.—*Johnson.*

Throughout the term of school, Thornwood was a frequent visitor at the Emmons home. Yet it would be affirming too much to say he had distinctly fallen in love with the new face. He had made up his mind he ought not to think of Emma, and still he was finding it impossible to do so. He was conscious of a void and it was an aching void. Yet he tried to think Lucy was no more to him than an agreeable friend and he assumed that she regarded him in the same light. He could not see, or to speak more accurately, he failed to see, that it might be otherwise with herself. Lucy was younger than Emma, but was equally sociable and rather more fond of books and reading. Still he imagined he felt less of the heart companionship that formed the source of his attachment for Emma Brandon.

A week before the close of his school, Thornwood went to the home of George Reger to make him a requested visit. On his return and while he was pursuing a footpath through a field, he lost his balance in going down a clayey bank made slippery by a light shower. The wayfarer was thrown with violence down the incline, his ankle turning during the fall and his bent forearm striking the projecting root

of a tree. It all took place in an instant, yet the instant seemed very long.

As soon as the bewilderment caused by the fall had begun to pass away, he felt a sharp pain darting through his arm, and he lay back a moment to overcome a sensation of faintness. He also became aware that he had sustained some injury in his foot. Grasping the injured forearm with his right hand, he partially raised himself. He then saw a boy in a field. Thornwood shouted to him and after three repetitions of the effort he gained his attention. It took two more shouts to induce the boy to move toward him. His annoyance at such stolidity smothered for the time being the stinging sensation in his arm.

"Confound his wooden head," thought the injured man. "If he had a taste of this, he'd get a move on him."

The boy was joined by a taller youth whom Thornwood had not observed, and the two came forward rather deliberately.

"Hurt, are you?" inquired the youth. "How'd it happen?"

"Stranger, ain't you?" added the boy.

"The slow, thick-headed pokes stare at me open-mouthed, and hesitate as if I had the smallpox," grumbled Thornwood to himself.

Almost before there was time for an audible reply, footsteps were heard in the opposite direction, and turning his head the injured man saw to his great relief the familiar figure of Daniel Wallace.

"Boys," exclaimed Wallace impatiently, "can't you see this is no time for introductions or for inquiries how he got hurt? Why, those are fool questions just now. Leave them till afterward. It is

our present business to look after him. What seem to be the injuries, Thornwood ?"

"I think the left arm is broken and there is a clumsy feeling about the right ankle. I can feel other bruises, but don't think they are much. Thought it best not to try to walk unless I had to."

"Yes, that was wise. You better let me examine," said Wallace as he began gently to draw back the sleeve.

"Ouch, that hurts, but go ahead."

"Faint ?"

"A little."

"Lie back then. That's the best thing. Boys, get him a drink out of the spring up yonder," said Wallace, drawing from his pocket a collapsible cup and pointing to a watering trough, immediately above which was a spring inside a tiny inclosure.

"The large bone is broken about midway between elbow and wrist," was the report. "Lucky the break didn't come right in the wrist; there are so many little bones there. Keep your hand round it. Now for your foot. Move it all around ; so."

Wallace made a careful examination of the lower member.

"I don't think there's any fracture here. It is a sprain in the ankle and there's a bruise on the shin. Say, you younger boy there, just run over to Crott's and ask them to 'phone for Dr. Woodrow to come at once to Fenmore's. Tell them to tell him it is a broken bone. You understand?"

"Yes, I'll 'tend to that," said the boy, who at once began to take long strides in the soft ground.

"Don't follow him," exclaimed Wallace to the boy's companion. "I have something else for you.

Hurry over to Fenmore's and tell them to hook up their buggy and come here with it and take him to their house."

The youth started away in another direction and Wallace turned to his friend.

"That," said he, "was the best use I could make of the fellows. Now draw up your well leg and help get back so you can rest against this tree. I have had hurts myself—worse than yours—and I can't do much at running or fast travel. Your arm and foot will begin to swell after a while. You met Guy Fenmore at the picnic. Their house is about as near as any."

"I can't tell how glad I am you came," remarked Thornwood.

"So am I," replied Wallace. "It is our business to help one another when we need it. I was on my way home from Vandyne's. I stayed with him last night. O, I know what hurts are. I've been there. Several years ago I was doing some field work in another state and had got forty miles from Townley, the base I was working from. My funds were almost out, but I was expecting a remittance from Townley, and I could get back there in a day's time by walking, if I chose to do so.

"Well, I stopped one night at a farmhouse. Just before I was ready to leave, I slipped in going down a sideling bank and sustained a severe wrench. I had already paid for my lodging. I told the man the situation and that put him in misery. He wanted me to let him go and telephone. I saw no use in that. The funds would have to come by letter, and I did not see that I ought to stand the expense of telephoning when my funds were so low.

"What do you suppose the man did? Why, without my knowing it, he had a farm wagon brought around with some straw in it, and I was bundled into the wagon, and not very gently, either. Then I was bumped along over six miles of rough roads to a railroad town, every jolt hurting me. I was on the straw and the driver on the seat. He didn't waste much time in driving to town. I was dumped down in a carpenter's shop, and after a while another man came in.

"Then I found out what was up. The last man was the overseer of the poor. He told me he had agreed to buy a ticket to Townley and charge it to the county. That made me boiling hot, but I was helpless and among entire strangers. It galled this man that I had too little money to get the ticket with. The patriotic skinflint was very mindful of the public funds. Well, he and another fellow hustled me over to the station and put me into the ladies' waiting room, where I had to sit alone for four hours, not able to move from my place. Dinner time passed and it passed me. I didn't propose to trouble strangers about that and perhaps lose some change in the operation. Two of the overseer's minions came along at the last possible moment and jerked me onto the train just as it was on the point of moving. The very last thing they did was to hand me a ticket, and when I had time to look at it, I found it would take me only half way there. What do you think of that?

"But as soon as I was on the train, I was among white people. The conductor, a big, stout man, helped me in gently, and at the end of my ride on his line, he carried me out bodily to the platform and

spoke to two miners, one a white and one a negro, but both about equally black at that time. They picked me up carefully and took me to the waiting room. There was a crowd of people waiting for a train, and I could hear some of them speculate as to what might be the matter with me. It had taken all but a very few cents to pay the deficiency in the car fare. The conductor on the other road told me he would pay my fare himself, and it would be all right whether he ever saw his money again or not. I got over the hurt speedily, but I sent money to that man to pay the overcharge and the county's expense. Then I took good care to write the matter up, so that certain parties could see their portraits for themselves."

"I notice a buggy coming this way," said Thornwood.

"Yes, that's the Fenmore rig. Guy is with it. Well, my story has filled in the time. I wanted to keep your mind off the hurt somewhat."

"It has had that effect, surely."

"Sorry to see you hurt," said Guy Fenmore as he came dashing up.

"Drive as close here as you can and tie to the tree so the team will stand all right," directed Wallace. "Mr. Thornwood can use neither arm and only one leg. We'll have to help him in."

"Like getting a lame calf on his legs, isn't it?" inquired the almost helpless man, after he had been assisted to the buggy seat.

"Not so bad as that," protested Guy Fenmore. "Now, Mr. Wallace, you better get in and drive. There isn't room for all three of us and we might hurt his arm. I'll go on afoot. I can travel quicker

than you and it would hardly answer to drive as fast as I did coming down."

The young man walked expeditiously, and the little party soon reached the Fenmore home, where Thornwood was helped out of the buggy more easily than he was put into it.

"Get him inside on the lounge," said Mr. Fenmore, who was an elderly man. "Take his coat and shoes off. He looks pale. The doctor will come right on, so the boy said as he went by here."

Dr. Woodrow, who was endowed with reddish, curly hair, made a very speedy drive and it seemed but a few moments before he was present. Meanwhile, the time did not lag, thanks to a brisk conversation between Wallace and Fenmore.

"This fracture is a sure enough break," said Dr. Woodrow. "Your arm will have to go into a sling for several weeks. As for your foot, that is a sprain. You can begin to get around on it in a few days."

"I have another week of teaching and I suppose that must go by default," commented the patient.

"Yes," said Wallace, "it will be exceedingly unhandy to navigate about until your ankle gets better. If there were only one hurt instead of two, you might go on with the school. You can't postpone very long without running upon institute week ; and besides, the interest of the school would suffer."

"And then it is compulsory to attend institute," remarked the teacher.

"We can get you excused," said Dr. Woodrow. "My professional statement will make it needless for you to go up."

"Try and not mind the lost week," added Wallace.

"Let nature make her repairs as soon as she will and not hinder her."

"And don't borrow any trouble while you are in this house," put in Guy Fenmore.

"Thunder, no," exclaimed the old man. "You'll get up from that tumbleset and be as good as ever. You are not going back to Bruceton before you have a chance to warm that lounge."

"Now," said Wallace at length, "I shall have to go. If there is anything I can do for you, don't hesitate to speak. I'll come in to see you on Tuesday. Now remember the advice you have heard. You know advice is easy to give."

"And in this case is well meant," interjected Thornwood.

"After your arm gets so you can use it once more," resumed Wallace, "we'll do some junketing. We'll go across the state line and visit Fort Necessity and some other historic spots that are near by."

Mr. Fenmore was soon left alone with his crippled guest.

"I'm a powerful talker," said he, "and when I tire you, you just saw me off—or ring me off. I believe that's what the telephone people say."

"I am very willing to be talked to," said Thornwood. "My hurts are swelling and don't feel comfortable."

The old gentleman then fell into a monologue, his eyes being sometimes half closed, and his head nodding toward his right shoulder by way of gesturing. At times, when made indignant by the topic he was discussing, he would get out of his rocking-chair, walk a moment to the open door and then resume his seat.

"This is Sunday, but there goes Lishe Dorman over to Farmington to talk cattle. Gad! Work like the deuce all the week and scheme like Satan all day Sunday. It just beats the band, the way he chases the dollars. He'll ask fifty dollars for an animal and be offered forty-nine seventy-five, and they'll talk round and round about that other quarter till the moon comes up. If he had a hole in his pocket and lost a nickel out of it, he'd lay awake all night. He did lose a cent of the big, old-fashioned sort in a shed that had nearly rotted down. He hunted all day and couldn't find his copper, and then—gad—he sot fire to the thing and sifted the ashes till he got his cent back.

"I knowed Lishe when he set up housekeeping. He'n his woman began with a bed, two chairs, some odds and ends of crockery, and a snuff-box. They could get along without a table, but couldn't get along without the snuff-box. Dipped out of the same box to save expenses. Now they have six hundred dollars in bank and no house fit to live in. Danged if I call that enjoying life. Pays his girls one cent a shock for husking his corn. One cent. Gad! And squeezes that cent till he wears a hole in it. His woman shrunk up a wool shirt in washing it, and he lost flesh till he got so small the shirt fit him again.

"There's old Absalom Tuck, the whippersnapper that groundhogs down on the run. Thinks he's some big man. Goes in heavy on politics. Gad! Danged if he could be elected to anything. A man that will talk about his neighbors like he does oughtn't to have any office. A man by the name of Link, from east Virginia, stopped with me one day, and after supper Ab Tuck's name was mentioned.

'Why,' said Link, 'we have Tucks in east Virginia. I will walk over and see him.' He went, but he come back in an hour and said old Tuck was the terriblest man he ever met. He was mighty grum at first, but brightened up some when he found Link been to supper. There was nothing on the table but a loaf of black-looking bread, a dish of bacon, and some small potatoes, and a dish of apple butter no bigger'n an egg shell. There was no plates, and the old copper-squeezer took the loaf of bread on his lap and cut each one a slice, which they used for plates to eat on, and when they was done they et up the slices and that saved dish washing. But first thing he asked a blessing in German which the stranger understood unbeknownst to him. Tuck, he thanked the Lord that the lean, hungry stranger had already eaten or he would have cleaned up what they had. Gad! He's worth eight thousand and he give just five dollars to the new church last spring. H'm.

"There goes Rev. Buckshaw over to Squash Hollow. Can't go in winter. The rest of us can get out, but he don't think he can. Only goes once a month in warm weather. Salts the sheep once each month in the summer and thinks they can do without it in the winter. Wants his pay just the same. Gad! H'm.

"I have some respect for a teacher who works in the summer, but—gad—there's them silk stocking chaps that dike up and sport round all summer. Not worth a curse, such fellows. Had one of them over here from Pennsylvany once. He got so starchy his shirt broke and his shoestrings busted. Learned him a little sense before he got through."

Thornwood remained with the Fenmores until he

could walk a little and then went to the home of George Reger. Almost the first person he met on his return to Bruceton was his friend Maurer.

"Glad to see you round again," said the latter.

"Let's walk up to the pasture by the creek and have a chat," proposed the teacher, to whom his late pupil was a comrade.

Entering the pasture, which lay on the border of the village, they sat in the shade of a chestnut. It was now September, and though the woods were green, the advent of fall was again apparent in the dusty roads and the dry aspect of some of the humbler forms of vegetation. Below them, at the foot of a sharp declivity, was the placid creek, which did not now afford any surplus to pour over the top of the dam. Through the branches of trees standing farther down the bank, they could see glimpses of a boat that was being rowed upstream by two girls.

"We used to roll flat stones down this bank to hear them splash into the water," said Thornwood. "But I shall not resume such exercise just at present."

"It will take time for the strength to come back into your arm," replied Maurer. "Well, I hear you have secured the Bruceton school this winter. That will begin in two months and then you will be earning once more. How did you come out with the summer school?"

"Made barely enough to cover my expenses until the public term begins. The doctor's bill and the lost time have taken up all the profit I would have made. The school did not pay so well as I hoped it would. I collected all the tuition, but the attendance

fell short. Since I came over the river I have simply been marking time; nothing more."

"I am sorry," replied Maurer. "You got badly knocked out this summer. Have you debts? Excuse the inquisitiveness, and don't answer if it is not a fair question."

"I don't mind telling. No, I don't owe a dollar."

"You are fortunate when it comes to that," commented Maurer. "But you are under a disadvantage in not having a home of your own. Boarding is expensive. Now I don't want you to think I do it just out of charity, but can't you come over and spend a week with me just before our schools begin? I shall be home then."

"I know your motive is all right," returned Thornwood. "Yes, I think I can. Mr. Steepleton has given me the same kind of invitation, and so has Mr. Vandyne."

"Cal Steepleton is a clever man and means just what he says," observed Maurer. "And so is Vandyne. But you need to be in something that is regular. In some kinds of employment your arm wouldn't be knocking you out very materially. The trouble with teaching in this country is that we have such a long vacation—seven months. One is bound to have something else to put with it if he wants to get ahead. Do you expect to keep on and teach after this winter?"

"I think not, and still my future does not look plain to me yet. I am naturally a great stay-at-home, and if I could win a snug little farm by my own efforts, I would consider it a big achievement. But the outlook for getting such a place is not very

bright. Still, I do not despair, and do not intend to, so long as I have the capacity for work.

"Well," replied Maurer, "if I felt drawn toward farming, I would sooner go in debt for land than most anything else. But I don't believe you are so much of a farmer as you think for."

"What gives you that opinion?" demanded Thornwood.

"I can't just explain myself," said Maurer with a significant smile, as he tossed a pebble down the hillside. "But the fact is, I don't really think you was cut out just for farming alone. I believe you'll find it so, too. It looks to me as though you could make more of yourself than to tramp over rough ground. And then I think you are too much inclined to spread out. You ought to center your efforts on fewer lines. At least I get that idea from what you have told me of your past life."

"Isn't farming honorable enough and doesn't it require brains to get the best results out of it?"

"Yes, I'll admit all that. Now, I believe it's about this way with you. You like country life better than city life. You want more elbow room and you imagine a farm is just what you want. I've noticed you some, and—I may be mistaken—but I don't think you will find you hanker after farming much more than I do. What you want of a farm is for a home and headquarters and a place you can work in odd times and fall back on in a wet time. Don't you think I hit you tolerable nigh?"

Maurer's smile had almost developed into a laugh.

"Well," said Thornwood rather slowly, "I don't know as we see things quite alike, but I will say this: You have started me to thinking."

"But why don't you strike for a better grade of school where the term is long and the pay much better?" suggested Maurer. "You have good abilities and a right good education."

"When it comes to that," rejoined Thornwood, "I don't think you read me so well as you think you do. In the first place, I am given credit for a better education than I have. I do believe I handle the English language pretty well, but after all, I have only a common school education. To be really fit for the position you speak of, I would first have to go to some good institution and spend a year or so there. If I were a few years younger, that might do. As I am now, I don't like to take the time, and I haven't the means to attend school. And more than that, I am not drawn toward school work any more than you think I am drawn toward farm work. And finally, I would have to go to town to live. When I teach, I try to do my duty by it, but there's no great reward to look up to, aside from the consciousness of having done your part."

"There," exclaimed Maurer; "we look at school matters about alike. Public school teaching don't appeal to a fellow's ambition. Our rewards and honors don't increase as we go along, and we don't get credit for half the good we accomplish. Teaching is a fine thing in theory, but there's a heap of humbug about it. They tell us what a grand thing it is to give others the best that's in us, to build up character, and develop child nature, and make true men and women. H'm. Why, Mr. Thornwood, you know, and I know, that instruction has to be forced onto most children. They don't come to school hungering after knowledge. Not much.

Only once in a while. They come because they have to, or because others come, or because they can get rid of work and have what they call a good time."

"Did you ever observe any inclination in children to visit the school grounds during vacation?" inquired Thornwood.

"No, sir," was the vehement reply. "They shun it like a pest house. Now tell me of a schoolhouse that looks real inviting after it has stood a dozen years? Why, they stick it up in some unsightly corner and don't repaint it till the first coat is all off. The inside will look as bad as the outside—and worse. It isn't that way with churches. Most of them are kept painted up and looking right comfortable inside. And that's right, too. A nice looking church helps a long way to put the church-goers into the right mood. It makes them more worshipful. Now a schoolroom is used a good deal more than a church is. But we run the kids into a room they can't respect and they get out of it the minute they are turned loose. I believe nice, cheerful rooms, as inviting as our living-rooms are, would pay, and pay well. Then the scholars would be much more likely to have good thoughts and better manners and they would make much better citizens. When a school room is cheerless and unpleasant, it leads to bad thoughts.

"I tell you, Mr. Thornwood, there is big room for missionary work right in that line. And it is the teachers that will have it to do. The trouble is not in any one place. It is all round. The county superintendent don't get a living salary; the teachers don't have encouragement to do their best; the patrons are not liberal-minded enough. But we can't blame the patrons when they themselves were not

trained any different. They get what they pay for. If they really wanted better schools and meant business along that line, they'd mighty soon have them. The only way to get better patrons is to take them young and train them up. When you improve the schools, you improve everything else. They say we teach for the money that's in it; that lots of us are untrained, and unqualified, and all that sort of thing. Why, dad blame it, growling don't improve schools; its work, patience, and good will that does. If people hire incompetent teachers right along, that's their fault. I tell you, Mr. Thornwood, there's no bigger field for doing good to humanity than right in the schoolroom. There's a chance for the self-denying, conscientious teacher who don't put the bread and butter question foremost. But for my part,—I oughtn't to say it, perhaps,—but I'm not built that way so much as I wish I was."

## XIX

### A Strange Character

> There are no accidents so unfortunate from which skilful men will not draw some advantage.—*La Rochefoucauld.*

A few days later Thornwood was sitting on the shady porch of the Emmons farmhouse. Lucy was also on the porch, and was sitting between two baskets. Out of the one she took large, greenish apples, while into the other she tossed the peelings.

"Let me find you some that are good to eat," said the girl as she rolled the apples about in the basket. "Here's a fallowater, but they are not mellow enough yet to taste good. Here's a sheep's-nose I think will do, and here's two bellflowers. There'd be a better chance out in the orchard, but Uncle Joe has just been picking up the windfalls. O, hold on there, let me peel them for you. I see your left hand is not a good apple holder."

"No, there's not much grip in it yet, but it is coming fast. Just think of the fruit that rots on the ground most every year in this valley. One here can eat what he wants without thinking of the expense, as he would if he were in town and had to go to a fruit stand or a green grocery."

"It would near break us up," remarked Lucy, "if we paid the prices they have to in the city for fruit, and still used as much as we do. They have lots more money than us people, but I don't see as it does them much more good. What big fools lots of them

are in those towns where there's public works. They are flush with money on pay-day, and then they pay their bills and spend what's left, and are strapped till next pay-day comes round. When they have good pay they strike for still more, and when hard times come on they are pinched on account of their wastefulness. That's when we hear this talk about soup houses. It's either a feast or a famine with them. A man, or woman either, who lives up all they earn in that way hasn't got good sense, I don't believe."

"Would you sooner live in town, Lucy?" asked the young man.

"No," was the decided response. "I'm a country girl and I'd sooner stay so. They have some privileges that we don't, but I'm not so sure they come out ahead in the long run. But then lots of our young people have to go away, because there's not enough for them to do here. They say you can find them in every town over in Fayette county. There's Frank Newland over there. He was—well, I suppose he was a gentleman friend of mine, once. He gets two dollars a day when he's not laid off, but he lives in a two-room house, crowded in with others down under a hill, where it's always hot and hardly a bit of air. He and his wife both had the fever. I'd hate to be cooking meals in a place like that."

"Do you think you'd ever teach?" inquired Thornwood.

"I may yet—don't know. If I do, it's not because I'd really like to. All the girls can't teach."

"What do you think of clerking, typewriting and the like?"

"Wouldn't like it, if it was to be followed up always. It's all right for a girl to teach or clerk a

while, but when it comes to doing regular man's work, I don't think it's right for women to be crowding in. I think they are getting out of their place then. And as for voting, I'm sure I don't want that, although I presume I could vote as near right as these doless young fellows we see round the country here'n there. It's just such ones that gives women their chance. And in town, it looks to me like there is more loafing and carrying on than in the country."

It was clear that Lucy was not prepossessed in favor of the "new woman," and Thornwood liked her all the better for this avowal of her opinions.

One September afternoon Thornwood was hailed from a house while passing down the main street of Bruceton.

"You are wanted at the 'phone, Mr. Thornwood. Kingwood wants to talk with you."

The teacher stepped into the house and the woman who called him rang the telephone bell.

"There they are," she at length said turning to the young man.

"Hello, Kingwood," called the teacher.

Whir-r-r.

The receiver then delivered a fragment of conversation to the teacher's ear: "It will do all right. The note's good, I think—All right then, much obliged, I'll attend to it."

Z-z-z-z. Whir-r-r.

"Hello."

"Hello-o."

The dim sounding voice was that of Joe Black.

"—man—Lloyd—'ploy you."

"Louder, please. Can't hear."

Z-z-z-z.

The central office at Kingwood was now heard.

"Mr. Black, Bruceton don't hear you. Speak louder."

"Hello, Thornwood."

"I'm here."

"Don't hear. You got a hot potato in your mouth."

"You turn on more steam."

"—man here—L–"

"What is the name ?"

"—oyd."

"Can't hear yet."

"Lloyd, double l-o-y-d, Lloyd, LLOYD. Wants—to—employ—you. Can—you—come—up—to-morrow?"

"Anything certain?"

"Don't hear you."

"He'll—foot—bills. School—supply—business. Wants—an—agent."

"All right. I'll come."

"That's all. Good by."

"Good by."

But the electric wire had yielded a sufficient clue, and at half past six the next morning Thornwood took passage with the mail carrier for the long ride to Kingwood. Mr. Lloyd was found writing letters in the public room of the Mountain House. He was a tall man approaching middle age, and was more plainly dressed than the commercial travelers Thornwood had been used to seeing.

"I am glad to meet you," said Lloyd. "You have some good friends here and they recommended you to me. They tell me that you've had hard luck this season and that your hurt will make easy employment necessary for a while. Come up to my room

and I will talk with you. O, excuse me one minute."

They had gone into the hall when Lloyd was accosted by Mr. Towne, a lawyer of the county.

"I wish to speak with you a moment."

Lloyd passed out to the hotel porch and had a few moments of conversation with the lawyer. The stranger then led the way upstairs to a room, in the middle of which was a school desk. On a table were other fixtures and a stack of circulars.

"This kind of patent desk may be new to you," said Lloyd. "It is the best kind out. Single seat. That's the sort to have. See how it opens? I am a partner in a large school supply factory in Ohio, and I am building one of my own in Parkersburg. Here is a metallic netting to place over windows. Banks and stores will give orders for this. Then we put out dustless erasers and some very superior crayons. We have a full line of school goods."

Mr. Lloyd now removed his brown panama hat, took a seat near the window, and put a huge wad of plug tobacco into his mouth.

"At the time of the war," continued Lloyd, "I was very young, but I was in the scouting service. Then I went out on the plains and got into the cattle business I was one of the cowboys. Those cowboys are much slandered. When they get full of liquor they sometimes shoot their revolvers off to tease people. They are good shots because they have to be. They have to contend with Indians, greasers, and white cattle thieves. A cowboy would practice shooting at a tree while he was riding at full gallop; and he would practice till he hit it every time, too. Once we got captured when we were

over the Mexican line. The authorities were going to execute us, but I communicated with the British consul—hated to have to do that—and he sent the case to Washington. The secretary of war was a personal friend of mine and he got me out of there in a hurry."

After putting another wad into his mouth and relating more of these experiences, Mr. Lloyd continued: "I like to help others and I do it by showing them how to help themselves. I am a good judge of character. I can read a person, because I have had so much experience with men. I can tell directly just where he will fit in. It is no trouble for me to make money; never was. Leave me without a dollar to my name, and I'll venture that within a year I would be worth ten thousand dollars. There was my brother-in-law. He was working on a salary. Said I to him one day, 'Why not do business for yourself?' Said he, 'I have no capital; can't get ahead any.' I loaned him two thousand and showed him how to use it. Inside of a year he had paid it back and had two thousand besides. Just needed some of the right sort of encouragement you see. That is the way with you. You need some one to show you in a friendly way how to get into business. I was out at Gladetown yesterday. I saw the Mr. Neil you worked for and he gave you a splendid name. And good reports come from Bruceton. Just as we were going to come upstairs you noticed Mr. Towne calling me out. He said, 'If you can do anything for that young man, I hope you will. He is somewhat of a stranger with us, but we like him.' You can do better things than you have been doing. I can see that you have been held back, and that has led you to distrust yourself.

What there is in you has not been brought out. You need to have your self-confidence developed and then you will drive things. Engage with me and in a year you could lay up twelve hundred dollars. Stay another year, and by that time you could think of starting up some sort of business for yourself. I hit on the school furniture business, because I take such an interest in all that pertains to education. My boy takes one prize after another in the town where I live."

Thornwood now told at some length the story of his life and why he came to leave the parental home.

"Just about as I thought," commented Lloyd. "You want to get up, but don't want to feel that some one is simply boosting you. You want to keep your self-respect. Now it is not given to all men to see the chances within their reach. That is a gift bestowed on some but not on all. It is the duty of anyone having that gift to point out opportunities to others. Sometimes it takes only a word or a hint for the other one to see at once and see plainly what he wonders he did not see before. It was commendable, the motive that led you to leave home. But a hand-to-mouth existence is not pleasant."

"I do not find it so," assented the listener.

"You need a home of your own and all that goes with a home," resumed Lloyd. "This business is new to you, but you can make a go of it if you will only think so. What did it cost you to come in today?"

"One dollar."

"Here is a dollar to replace it, and you must be my guest while you are here. I will spend a while

with you, so as to train you for the work. You shall have an outfit like this."

"I could not take the field for a month," replied Thornwood. "My arm is still weak."

"Very good. Let it be a month from now. I will come through here to give you the personal training. This afternoon we will go over to Lyon district and get an order from there. You only need look on. I shall pay your expenses. When your regular time begins, I will furnish you with expense money. I always do that with my agents. One can then work his territory without feeling straightened. I must be here by to-morrow noon. I will then give you an errand to Union district by which you ought to make at least ten dollars, and you can do it in two days. It is not best to be too headlong in doing business with strangers. Give yourself time to get acquainted and then the business goes off more smoothly. Well, there's the dinner bell. Let's go down."

Before the two men drove out of town, Thornwood went into the office of the Plaindealer and wrote two very brief letters to ascertain the standing of his prospective employer.

"What do you think of him?" he asked of Black.

"He talks a good deal, but then he ought to be O. K. He has a good equipment with him."

"His talk sounds fair enough," remarked Thornwood. "But there is something in his manner that gives me a little mistrust. I may be too suspicious, possibly, but he is a puzzle to me. I shall hold on to my school for the present."

The two men drove into the valley of the Three Fork, a stream then running low in its boulder-strewn channel, overhung with the branches of forest

trees. They passed through an almost deserted village, where a silent iron furnace and the mounds of debris at the openings to the ore banks were mute witnesses to former activity and present desolation.

"Placed an order worth sixty dollars," exclaimed Lloyd as they began their return. "Now you see what it is possible to do in this business after gaining a little insight into it. Here is my card and address. When you wish to write a personal letter, write me at Parkersburg to my private box—number 714—and in that way it will not get into our general mail. Write me fully and freely any time. I want to see you do well."

"Stay with me till you get returns from your letters of inquiry," said Joe Black to Thornwood as the latter came into his office. "I can make your good arm useful enough to cover your expenses."

The replies to both letters were very prompt and they came in the same mail. The first one opened read as follows:

"There is no such factory here in Parkersburg, either built or under way, and we know of no such party as C. D. Lloyd."

And the second yielded this intelligence:

"I have made inquiry regarding the party you mention, and find I cannot recommend the same as being altogether reliable. He is a trifle loose in the upper story."

"Well," reflected Thornwood, "I had some misgiving all the while and I am not entirely surprised. I have not actually lost by him, and on the other hand I have learned something."

## XX

### A Bachelor Trio

What is home with none to meet,
  None to welcome, none to greet us?
Life is sweet and only sweet,
  When there's one we love to meet us.—*Swain.*

As Thornwood stepped out of the post-office, he found himself confronted by his whilom friend, Tom Ross.

"Why, how are you, George?" was his impetuous greeting. "I thought you'd dropped out of the world. How are you and where are you keeping yourself. I'm going over to the Mountain House for dinner. Come, go 'long with me. I've got to drive clear down to Rockville this evening. Didn't know I was clerking in Terra Alta, did you? I was sent out to do a little business for the boss."

"How are you driving?" asked Thornwood as soon as he saw a chance to put in a word crosswise.

"Buggy."

"Can you take me to Rockville?"

"Yes, but see here, Jim The boss told me to drive fast and make quick time and you know what that means. Now you come over to the hotel, but don't say a word to me while you are there. I am going to let on as though it's to pay for something you done. Then you start off—I'll give you the wink when—and I'll overtake you within a mile out of town. That's all right now. Come on."

Mr. Keith, the proprietor of the hotel, was stand-

ing on his porch when the two friends entered the yard. He was a spare man with dark complexion and iron-gray stubble beard. His spectacles were perched up on his brow, he was without a coat, and he wore a blue-checked shirt.

"Shall I have good weather all this evening for my trip across the river?" inquired Tom.

"I think so, sir," replied Mr. Keith. "I think so. We are going to have some falling weather soon, but it won't strike us to-day; not to-day."

Within an hour Tom had overtaken Thornwood on the outskirts of the town.

"Wanted to go out to Gladetown right bad," exclaimed Tom, as he drove rapidly toward the river. "My boss wouldn't allow me the time just at present. I've only been at Terra Alta a month, though."

"I would like to have gone out there myself," remarked Thornwood. "But I am not in the best walking trim yet, and actually I could not afford the hack fare."

Tom looked wonderingly at his friend and the latter read his thoughts.

"Tom, I had to part with all my earnings for the year I was out at Gladetown, and my bad luck this summer has prevented my laying up anything since."

"I would have loaned you the hack fare," replied Tom.

"Don't doubt it a bit, but there would have been just so much for me to return."

"A big lot," said Tom, contemptuously.

"No," declared his friend, "I had one experience with debt and I decided then I would go to considerable inconvenience before I incurred another, no matter how small."

"All well in theory," replied Tom, "but it's another of your iron-clad rules that you are a little too particular about."

"How are all the Gladetown folks?" asked Thornwood.

"Quite well when I left there; all of them. They'd like for you to make them a visit. I've heard lots of people ask about you. Em was speaking of you the day I came away. You ought to go out to see her."

"To see another fellow's girl?"

"H'm. You get out. People all thought you was her fellow. She thinks a powerful sight of you, I can tell you that. Newt Hansell don't go round there any more, and I think the other party has lost his grip."

Thornwood's first impulse was to think his friend sarcastic. But when he noted the unusually earnest look on his face, he concluded that Tom was too sanguine. However, the words of the younger man put Thornwood to thinking, and when conversation was resumed it was on another topic.

They were more than half way to Bruceton when they left the pike leading to that village. They turned into a road that wound up the narrow valley of a murmuring creek. On the one hand was a vertical cliff, the face thickly seamed with horizontal fissures. On the other were erect, gloomy pines, towering amid the fall-tinted deciduous trees and giving this ravine the name of Deep Hollow. The road then crossed the undulating district which extends to the brink of the river bluff. In the fields were many brown tufts of the tall, coarse broomsedge grass. Descending at length into the deep valley of Sandy Creek and passing an immense overhanging ledge,

the friends crossed on an iron bridge, the rock-choked channel of the now impetuous stream.

It was but a few more miles to the home of Calvin Steepleton. The farmer was seen riving shingles from a section of an oak log, and his wife was stirring apple butter in the dooryard.

"Here you are at last," exclaimed Steepleton. "How's the old boy? I thought you's taking mighty good care not to come round my way. How'd you like to shave up these shingles with one hand? Got to roof my corn crib. Come on up the house now. I'm through. We'll have supper directly. I hearn y' coming when you's miles away, and I caught the oldest, toughest, scrawniest rooster I could find, and he's in the oven now. If yer teeth is not good, you might turn the grindstone while I tech up a case knife for y'. You need a place to hang up a while, so you can take it easy-like till yer arm gets better. I've had an arm broke, and it don't get good and strong in one day, and then a fellow's not very handy with one arm like a stick o' wood."

"I can pick apples and do some of your chores," said the guest.

"Jest as y' feel like. I reckon yer 'bout like me. Don't like to set round all day and do nothing. But then I didn't send for y' to come out to do only what y' pleased. I got some buckwheat ground the other day and you'll have some griddle cakes to build you up on. Nothing like them things to stick to the ribs. And if y' still a caff, tha's plenty o' milk."

"Maybe yer tired," said the host, after they had chatted for some time after supper. "Long way from Kingwood out here. When you want to lay down, I'll show y' to yer bunk."

"It s a little early, but I believe it will suit me now."

"All right," said the farmer, picking up a lamp.

He took his guest into a narrow room, containing a bed in each end.

"The one in yon end is the one I believe you's to sleep in to-night. There's a young fellow to come in after a while, but he'll be here only this once. I'll leave the light here. You can put it out or leave it burn, jest as y' please. Well, good night."

Thornwood was scarcely in bed before he sprang out and came to his feet with a promptitude and energy that made itself heard in the rest of the house.

"Pap, O, pap. Come here." said a girl's voice convulsed with laughter.

In another moment the farmer came rushing into the room.

"Believe I'll try the other bed," said Thornwood with a laugh. "Did you run short of straw and fill the tick with blackberry sprouts?"

"I declare that's mean," exclaimed Steepleton. "You mustn't blame me. It's them dagonned girls. They didn't think of your goin' to bed so soon, or they'd a told me. They intended to prank that John Harman that's comin' here to-night. He's a cousin o' their'n. Didn't hurt yer arm?"

"Not a bit."

"Well, I'll be dogged," said the farmer passing his hand over the sheet. "Thought you's layin' down on a spring tooth harrer, didn't y? Them rips has gone put a hull lot o' chestnut burrs under the sheet. Just climb into the other bed and kiver up, Thornwood. The old woman will be in in a minute and rid up this one. You don't want no bunkmate

thrashing round and hurting yer game arm. Tomorrow, you just slap their ears—wool 'em good and pay 'em off for it."

"That makes me think of a story I've heard my grandmother tell," said Thornwood as he crawled into the other couch. "There was a Connecticut sea captain who was sick, and a simple-minded woman was helping about the house. He was sitting up to have his bed made. She had warmed it with one of the old-fashioned warming pans they used to use up there. She had been told to put some sugar into it to increase the heat, but the old simpleton strewed the sugar on the sheets and the hot warming pan nearly melted it. Then she said, "Jump in, Cap'n Clark; pipin' hot.' Cap'n Clark jumped in, but he jumped out as quick as I did."

After a week with Steepleton and another with Vandyne, there came a tour afoot with Wallace. They rambled over the Ligonier valley, visiting several places of interest associated with the campaigns of the French and Indian war and the Whiskey Insurrection of 1794. Then Thornwood spent a few days with Maurer before beginning his school.

On the morning of the Saturday after Thanksgiving, Maurer came into Bruceton with a sled and met his friend on the street.

"Perhaps," said Maurer, "I was just in time to catch you before you had gone out to see Lucy Beckett. Now Sant Wedman asked me to bring you out to his place, so we three could have a little bachelor gathering;—that is, if you have no positive engagements."

"All right," was the prompt reply. "I would really like to go. He has been asking me to come

out and see him, but I have never done so yet."

The bachelor abode of Sant Wedman lay within an hour's drive. His little farm was almost shut in by woods and no other house was within view. The little dwelling contained but one lower room and the furnishings of the apartment were very meager. But there was a cheerful fire in the stove, and it was a pleasing contrast to the drifting snowflakes without.

"Thought you fellows might stand it to come out and spend a little while with the old bachelor," said Wedman. "It s an off day with me, same as you fellows."

"Yes, indeed," replied Thornwood. "We were glad to do so."

"Take these chairs, boys. I got only two. I'll find some place else," said the proprietor of the house.

"No, no," expostulated Maurer. "You keep one chair yourself. I'll take this home-made affair. It's very comfortable to sit in. No—you do as I say, or we'll have a scrap right straight."

And Maurer seated himself in a rustic chair which was a little too high even for his long legs.

"Don't you get mighty lonesome, all by yourself here?" continued Maurer.

"Nothing like being used to a thing," replied the hermit, as he produced a portion of a large cake. "Boys, let me treat you to some of this."

"You don't mean to say you made that?" demanded Thornwood.

"O no, it was give to me."

"The cake is all right," declared Maurer. "But how much nicer it would be if you had a wife here to make such things. Here you are, all by your

lonesome, and when you do a day's work on your farm, you also have to do your cooking and other housework. That makes double work. I just couldn't do it. Mother says I'm not the least good in the house."

"It does make a rather heavy job sometimes, take it altogether," admitted Wedman.

"Why don't you get a housekeeper to help you out?" pursued Maurer.

"Why don't you fellows?" laughed the hermit. "You are both plenty old enough."

"O pshaw!" muttered Maurer. "I've got no girl. My mother is my housekeeper. I can't answer for Mr. Thornwood, but he seems to have a cinch on one of our mountain daisies."

"No," declared Thornwood without the semblance of a smile. "I have no girl—that I know of."

"That you know of?" echoed Maurer with a laugh.

"What?" demanded Wedman incredulously. "How about Lucy Beckett?"

"She is a very pleasant, agreeable acquaintance, but I don't count her as anything more."

"I've heard other fellows talk that sort of way," scoffed the hermit.

"She will grow into something more to you," affirmed Maurer. "You may not be using honey talk just yet, but you like her and she likes you, or you wouldn't go to see her. The attachment will deepen before you know it. And what is more, you wouldn't go there if the idea of marrying her was something you did not think of at all. You are holding her in reserve. There are some old embers to die out. Then we'll see what's what. There was

never a drake without his mate, and when you lose one lady-love you mighty soon see another if you only look. If it wasn't for this other girl, whoever she is, Lucy would be all right. You think she don't come close enough to your ideal now, but that's because you haven't given up your other choice. When you once take a downright interest in a girl, she grows prettier in your eyes and you see more good qualities in her."

Thornwood smiled, but he also colored perceptibly. Wedman noticed the play on his countenance.

"That's the hot stuff," he exclaimed. "Earl, you are just hitting him off right."

"Maurer, hadn't you better write a treatise on courtship, or else hang out your shingle as a mind reader," suggested the victim.

"I believe you'll have to admit, Mr. Thornwood, that I can read you tolerable well," replied Maurer with a significant laugh, as he sat rapping his heels together.

"What you say as to me and Miss Beckett might happen, I suppose—or could happen," admitted Thornwood. "Sometimes I think I'll not go out there so often as I do, for fear I am after all giving her too much encouragement. But still I don't like to keep out of society."

"People looks at it in just one way you'll find," affirmed Wedman. "She's not the only girl you know, but she's the only one you make it a point to go to see. Nobody gets fooled."

"You are conscientious about it," added Maurer. "You think if there is something in the way to keep you from looking on her as a possible wife, you don't want to give her cause to believe you do have inten-

tions. But that is rather particular business, let me tell you. One might be asked some fine day to say what his intentions are. I don't go much on these platonic friendships they talk of. That's against nature. If I like a girl, I like her well enough to marry her, or else she don't interest me but mighty little; and I believe that's the way with most of us."

"But what's the matter with Lucy?" urged Wedman. "Ain't she a fine girl?"

"Certainly she is," assented Thornwood. "But I know another who I think is nearer my choice."

"Who you feel you have to give up and still you think you can't," interpreted Maurer, his heels beating time to his words. "That's just as I said a bit ago. I thought your life had a romance in it. A disappointment in love is the hardest sort of one to get over. Now I respect a man who has some depth of feeling. There is so many that marry just through impulse or passion, or to get some one to cook their meals and mend their old duds. There's no real companionship in such a case. Such men merely board with their wives. When they lose one they hunt up another right away, just as you or me would hunt up another boarding house if the old one closed down. No, sir, I doubt if one match in three is really a love match. And talk about Miss So-and-so's marrying well. Bah! It's because the fellow has some money. It's a case of bargain and sale. But perhaps most people don't have too many opportunities to choose from, and so they take what's going. If there was more love mating, there'd be fewer of these divorces."

"If I thought you both were simply inquisitive," said Thornwood, "you would not get much out of

me. But I esteem you both as genuine friends, all wool and a yard wide, and we are not talking frivolously."

"I shouldn't think the life you lead would be altogether pleasant," remarked Maurer. "You are one of those who are intended for homes of their own."

"But perhaps neither one of you has to contend as I do with the question of finance. Is it right to ask a woman to marry you before you can see a home of your own?"

"I don't know about that," declared Wedman earnestly. "I look at it if a man can pay board he can keep house—provided his housekeeper is a helpmate that is a helpmate. And then you wouldn't be paying out a dollar a month for washing, and your clothes would last longer with some one to mend them up. I've knowed men to marry when they could hardly more'n scare up the cash to pay the county clerk and the parson, and yet they come on well. They had an object then—something to spur 'em up. They didn't begin to save till they had some one to help them save. That's right, now. But I'd sooner live in an old barn and feed on cold potatoes and sour milk than be tied to a girl who can't cook, mend, or sew, and ain't ashamed she can't."

"That's my opinion," echoed Maurer, whose heels were now silent. "If it's all right for the wife to be inefficient, it's all right for the man to be inefficient—and some of them are. It's as broad as it is long."

"Well," said Thornwood slowly, "I will give you a little insight into my case. I left a comfortable home in which I will have a half interest. But I wasn't getting on. It seemed to me that the smart ones were hurried right along, while the less capable

ones were pushed to one side. Give a dog a bad name and plenty of kicks, and he becomes worthless. So I resolved to strike out into an entirely new atmosphere and try myself. That accounts for my being here. During the first year things seemed to come my way. Then duty seemed to require that I part with everything I had laid by. As to my bad luck this season, you both know about it. But of course the people here are not to blame for any of my backsets. I have been made to feel at home, and I propose to go on with my battle. It is taking time and may take a good deal more. You speak of a romance in my life. I once thought I was engaged to a girl, but while I was absent for a few months and while she was still writing me, she married another and I am very glad of it. I had thought I liked her, but I didn't. I never loved any girl until I came to this county, but at length I saw—or thought I saw—that she was another's."

"Then there is doubt in the case?" asked Maurer.

"Yes, and I have lately thought there is considerable doubt."

"Then you ought to clear it up, even if it takes a little nerve," asserted Maurer. "Do you know, Mr. Thornwood, that in friendship, especially when affection enters into the case, there is chance for an unpardonable sin just as much as in theology? The affections may languish under neglect or want of recognition until they don't respond any more. The injury may not be intentional, but it is not forgiven. Either party may commit the offense. Yes sir, Mr. Thornwood, you ought to find out about that girl one way or the other. You have been letting that matter cloud your life."

"That was just why I left Gladetown," replied Thornwood. "I could have had work there all this while. But still I like it over here, and then it is my native district. Now you understand I wanted to see whether I should win my fight before I thought of setting up a home."

"But a true wife will help you succeed in your struggle," said Maurer. "You are working on a theory that won't go. You imagine you are bound to get your affairs in just the shape you want them before you even ask a girl. That's a mistake of yours, Mr. Thornwood. You are trying to carry the load single-handed. With a helpmate it would be easier. You would have sympathy and encouragement from her, and then two can see better than one. That brings me to another point, Mr. Thornwood, though you might not like for me to say it. You keep your own counsel. That's a good plan, only you carry it too far. You and me and all of us have mistaken notions sometimes, though we don't see them at the time. A few words from a friend may put the matter in the right light to us, because he looks at it different. Then I don't think you are inclined to court a girl in the right way. You keep too far from her. She'd be in doubt whether you cared any more for her than her society. You think you are looking for a wife, but you go at it as though it's only a housekeeper you want. A woman's judgment will be as good as yours, and you miss it when you make your own judgment all-sufficient."

"Perhaps you are right again, Mr. Phrenology," replied Thornwood. "But you don't seem to follow the advice you give me."

"I admit that," conceded Maurer. "I am better

at giving advice in the girl business than I am in following it. I am naturally restless. If I were alone, I wouldn't stop till I had drifted half over the United States. I can't seem to get down to any one line. One time I thought I'd try for the civil service. Then I concluded I didn't want any of it in mine. Another time I had a notion of a clerkship in a stationery store. But now, that is something I couldn't think of."

"You should cultivate more concentration of purpose," suggested Thornwood.

"The willingness is there, but the concentration don't seem to come. But here is Mr. Wedman. He don't care to roam. He has a snug little house, but how much more cozy it would look if he had a woman here. There'd be flowers in this room and pictures on the wall. To one living all by himself and for himself, what cheery prospect is there to look forward to?"

"Don't you know, Earl, that you are rubbing where the skin is off?" remonstrated Wedman, with a laugh which did not seem sincere.

"But I don't see, Maurer," exclaimed Thornwood, "how you can be unintended for home life when you picture it out so well. Better curb your restlessness and find a wife, and then you'd be steadied down."

"I might drag her about so much that she would be glad to leave me."

"Not likely," replied Thornwood.

"But I see a far-off look in Earl's eyes when him and me were at Jerry Byers's last fall," declared Wedman. "Effie Byers was sitting on the organ stool right behind her brother George. He was in a

low rocker. Effie is a right affectionate girl, and her arms were folded very lovingly round his neck. That made Earl wish he had a—"

"Sister?" suggested Maurer.

"O yes, sister, of course," replied Wedman ironically.

"And now, Mr. Wedman," said the teacher, "I believe it is your turn to tell us why, with a home, you still live by yourself."

"I needn't, if I had a fine house, a big farm, and a few thousand dollars in bank. Then there'd be a widow after a while to offer a home to some younger fellow."

There was an undertone of bitterness in the hermit's reply.

"No," declared Thornwood, "all women are not that way, although many of them are. You would be taken for what you are, not for what you might be worth."

"Well, boys," replied the host, "they say love's like the measles—all the worse when it strikes you late in life. I've read somewhere that honest confession is good for the soul. I used to be a different man from what I am now. I was almost a skeptic and mighty near a woman-hater besides. Now, I am not. I have got over those cranky notions, but then I am a gray, grizzled, ugly fellow. There is no one to blame but myself. It's nature for a fellow to want a real home, but he don't always have one."

There was silence a few moments. The deeper feelings of the three men had been stirred. The conversation drifted into other themes, as though by tacit consent and to relieve the tension.

## XXI

### A Flame Rekindled

Affection lights a brighter flame
Than ever blazed by art.—*Cowper.*

It was the week before Christmas. The teacher of the Bruceton school was in Kingwood, having been summoned as a witness in a matter before the circuit court.

A considerable number of men were standing on the broad sidewalk before the court-house. Few of them were townspeople, as was partly evident from the frequency of frayed and unmended working clothes, blue or black woolen shirts and felt boots. Every few moments some one would open the court-house door, and occasionally a lawyer would go outside to visit his office or talk with a client.

The window above the porch flew open and the deputy sheriff looked out, his hands resting on the window ledge.

"B. T. Spingle. B. T. Spingle. B. T. Spingle. Tall Sycamore of the Wabash. Come to court."

"They've called our case," exclaimed a man standing near Thornwood. "It won't take 'em long to get through with it and then we can go home."

A few moments later, Mr. Neil passed down the sidewalk, and recognizing Thornwood he turned aside to shake hands.

"Well, Jim," said he, "you seem to be courting."

"Yes, one kind of courting, but we expect to be through in a few hours."

"It's not much after ten," observed Mr. Neil. "I'll not be going home for some time. Come out to Gladetown and see us. This is Saturday. I'll send you over here to-morrow or to the Beaver Hole, just as you like."

"I'll go out with you," replied Thornwood very promptly.

He had already made up his mind to visit Gladetown, even if he had to walk the entire distance And even before Mr. Neil was ready to return, the case in which his recent employee was a witness had been disposed of. But December days are short and darkness came on before they reached the end of their ride.

Before it was time next morning for the Sunday school bell to ring, Thornwood was at the door of the Brandon home. He had not inquired after Emma and did not even know whether she were in the village. The Neils had refrained from mentioning her name. He rather wondered at this, and was not sure whether he ought to feel relieved or disappointed.. But if he did not know whether Emma were at home, neither had he any assurance as to how she would receive him. After his eight months of silent absence, would she not demonstrate the justice of the old saw, "Out of sight, out of mind?" But at all events there was no snow and there could be no sleigh ride for her to refuse.

As Thornwood stood at the door, perhaps the pumping apparatus in his bosom thumped harder than usual. He was not thinking much about it, however, when he saw Emma appear at the door with the smile on her face and the bright, expressive look in her dark eyes that brought him back to the pre-

ceding December. He had always liked Emma's face and he now called it pretty.

"Why, you are quite a stranger, Mr. Thornwood. Come in. Let me have your hat. And take off your overcoat."

"Aren't you going to Sunday school, Miss Emma."

"No, not this moning. And then it's not preaching day, you know. Every one else is going from here, except little Mary, of course."

"Eight months since I was here," observed the caller. "And long months, too."

Perhaps Emma detected some inner meaning in the last words, for she sat silent a moment, looking at the coals in the grate.

"You went off rather unexpected," she remarked. "We didn't know of it until you were gone."

Thornwood felt the implied reproach.

"It wasn't just the right thing to do," he admitted. "I was moved by impulse a good deal. I had just heard bad news from home."

"Sickness or anyone dead among your people?" asked Emma, quickly.

"No, not that, but the news was bad enough. I met with a loss equal to a fire, if not worse, for where there's a fire, there's generally some insurance."

Thornwood shrank from telling the bald truth, yet he did not want Emma to hold a mistaken surmise.

"I am sorry to hear that," she replied. "I know that when things don't go right, it makes one feel like trying to run away from himself."

"I notice you've let your hair grow out," remarked the visitor. "That improves your looks very much to my mind."

"You think it more becoming? O, I reckon I let it grow to please you," replied the girl with assumed carelessness.

"Any more box suppers?" inquired Thornwood, after a slight pause.

"No, not in the school," replied Emma, the color deepening somewhat in her cheeks. "Do you like it better over where you are?"

What was Emma driving at?

"I have got along very pleasantly in both places," said Thornwood. "I wanted to come out here in September, when I was called up to Kingwood, but it was not so I could. Then I planned to take a few days off during Christmas week."

"It is almost here now. Can't you stay for it?"

"It would hardly be possible. I had to go to Kingwood as a witness in court, and lost several days out of my school in that way. The trustees expect this to cancel the Christmas vacation. I can stay out here till to-morrow morning, but I must be in school again Tuesday."

"That don't give you a long stop."

The man thought Emma spoke with some disappointment.

"No, not so long a stop as I would like to make."

"Why, there's a little skift of snow coming," exclaimed Emma. "I was afraid this would be a green Christmas. It don't seem like a real Christmas not to have snow with it."

Thornwood looked through the window and saw the snowflakes driving down the street. His thoughts were carried back to sleigh rides and refusals, and although he felt moved to call up the incident of twelve months before, he refrained from doiug so.

At length the caller began to fumble about for his hat.

"Why, you are not going back to Mr. Neil's?" exclaimed Emma.

"They were looking for me."

"Let them look. Stay and have dinner with us."

Emma's tone was insistent, and she felt piqued that the visitor thought of leaving so soon and that he should exhibit restraint in his manner.

"Thank you, Miss Emma. It really suits me better to stay."

"Now," said the girl, "you must excuse me while I see about the supper. I shall have the girls clear up the table. You might shake the dust out of the organ. I can hear you from the kitchen."

Thornwood was now more at ease. He and Emma chatted briskly throughout the afternoon, and he was her escort to the League.

"Do you know they say Clint Latch is going to be married?" asked Emma as they were returning from the church.

"Why no. Who is the other one?"

"The girl that works there—Myrtle Bayne."

"Has he taken out a license?"

"O no," laughed Emma. "He hasn't taken any license yet, but they have long talks out in the kitchen. I'd like to be a fly on the wall at those times."

After Thornwood had returned to Bruceton, he recalled this fragment of conversation, and pondered it. But at the present moment he was too thick-headed to see in Emma's words more than a bit of neighborhood gossip.

"Must you go now?"

It was after the return from church and Thornwood had made a final movement for his hat. He looked at Emma, and reading the soft light in her eyes he felt convinced that if there were any barrier between them, it lay in his own imagination. He no longer doubted the asssurance given him by Tom Ross.

"Emma, I will come over when my school is out. Will you write to me while I am gone?"

The girl's cheeks colored to a warm hue as she in turn caught the wistful expression on the face of the exile from home.

"Yes, I'll write, but I'm afraid my letters won't be very good."

"I'll risk them. I'll write first—just after Christmas. Will you write often?"

"As often as you do."

But why did the young man stop short with the suggestion of a correspondence? Perhaps he had never heard the saying of Abraham Lincoln, when he declares that many a mistake is made by holding in the horse that is about to leap.

The long wintry ride was not wearisome to Thornwood as he returned with a light heart to Bruceton. On Christmas eve he wrote a long letter. He unburdened himself in regard to his hopes and plans, and he told more on those three sheets of note paper than he had ever confided to his nearest friends.

He knew the letter went, because he took it to the office himself and saw the postmistress stamp it. But the days came and went until they lengthened into weeks, and still no reply came to lighten his work and put new warmth into his life.

Was Emma indeed fickle, or had she repented of a

hasty promise? He thought of writing again. But why should a plainly addressed letter miscarry in that short distance? So he put off writing through sheer wrong-headedness, and he came to the point where he was too reluctant to send an inquiry. The disappointment was most bitter, and to him it seemed unaccountable. Yet it was borne with grim fortitude. He sought relief in close application to his school work, and for a time he was as much a recluse as during the preceding winter. Then his calls at the log house were resumed.

## XXII

### Making a New Effort

Emergencies disclose resources.—*Grosjean.*

As Thornwood was going to his room on the afternoon of the last day of school, he was accosted by Daniel Wallace.

"Thornwood," said the elder man, "this dry, open weather will last two more days at least. What do you say to going with me and taking that trip to Dulaney's cave to-morrow?"

"I am willing, only I would like to finish out my school reports right now, while everything is fresh in mind. I think I can join you by half past four."

"You'll find me at Dr. Woodrow's," replied Wallace.

The two friends were on their return from the trip and were near the Mason and Dixon line. They had just emerged from a belt of woodland and were entering a path which led through an open field high up on a mountain slope. Before them was the broad Ligonier valley, drained by the waters of the Sandy. The sun had just begun to peer over the summit of Laurel Ridge.

"What does all that mean?" suddenly exclaimed Thornwood. "There are two fellows a couple of hundred yards before us. They just now came out of the woods and stood on that rail fence a moment as if to take an observation. As quick as they saw us they dropped behind the fence, and now they are

holding up their hats on what are either sticks or gun barrels."

"It looks crooked," replied his companion. "But perhaps they are only trying a bluff on us."

The friends continued to go forward, and in a very few moments the strangers sprang to their feet and ran down a hillside, crouching so low that only their hats could be seen above the fence. Their course was at a right angle to the path which Thornwood and Wallace were pursuing and it lay in the direction of the mountain summit. Just before they passed out of sight, there came the report of a gun and a puff of smoke, followed the next instant by the whizzing of a ball. The objects of this attention did not hurry, although in another instant they were in the shelter of a bank.

"A parting compliment," observed Thornwood.

"It was a very wild shot," replied Wallace. "They were not trying to hit us. They have been into some misdoing and are slipping away. That performance at the fence was to see if we would scare, and that shot was a warning to keep away. They might think we were after them. They couldn't tell but what we are armed. This state line is a very convenient thing for refugees to dodge across. The cave we visited was once a robber's nest, and not the only one in these hills, either. It is only a very little while since the Cooley gang was broken up. They used to operate near here. I hope these fellows have not been breaking into some store."

"That's a very unpleasant suggestion," remarked Thornwood. "All my funds are in one of the Bruceton stores. I decided to put them there for safe-

keeping, rather than leave them in the house where I board."

"I don't think I would have done that," declared Wallace. "A store safe is a conspicuous target for a burglar. No settlement is so orderly but what it has a few hard cases, to say nothing of outside toughs that prowl around. But let us hope for the best."

"A misgiving has seized me that I can't throw off," said Thornwood, a few moments later.

His fear was only too well founded. On his return to the village, he found that the very store had been entered by burglars and the safe blown open and robbed. His earnings for the winter were gone. For a while, Thornwood felt as though stunned.

"I may work and save," he said to himself, "but how long am I to enjoy nothing of what I lay by? At this rate, I shall yet have to go back to my father, somewhat like the prodigal son. Well, I shall go to Kingwood and see what I can find there."

A hard tramp through the slimy mud that veneered a frozen bottom, conducted him the next day to the county seat. The office of the Plaindealer was his first objective.

"Yes, sir," replied the editor, with a heartiness that warmed the blood in Thornwood's veins. "As good luck will have it, we can find a place for you. One of my men leaves at the end of the week. Come into the office Monday and take his case."

"Good for you. I'll go back to Bruceton meanwhile."

"What's all that for?"

"To save a little. There's a few days to my credit where I board."

"Mighty hard way to save," exclaimed the editor. "I'd pull somebody's leg first. It is slavish walking. Well, see here, Thornwood. I noticed when you came in you looked rather straight, as though you were worried up about something. Maybe you're broke?"

"To speak plainly, I am—unpleasantly near it. The robbery at Bruceton cleaned me up."

"What? Well, now look here. I have no spare bed in my house, but there's a lounge. You occupy that and stop with us till work begins."

"I will do so if I can render some equivalent. I'll run out to Gladetown to-morrow. When I go to work, I'll board at the Kenton. If it is not permitted me to save anything, I'll not stint my living too much."

## XXIII

### A Blighted Visit

It is better to have loved and lost,
Than never to have loved at all.—*Tennyson.*

It was dinner hour at the Kenton House and all the guests were sitting at the short table in the farther end of the dining-room. They were three young men, named Romine, Brigham, and Shipley, and a scanty-haired carpenter of middle age whose name was Biggins. Birdie and Rosa, the daughters of the landlady, were waiting on the table.

"It must be getting to be a serious case, sure," remarked Birdie.

"What is ?" inquired Romine, looking over his uplifted coffee cup.

"I saw the senator from Ohio blacking his shoes just before coming in. He put a shine on them you could see yourself in, and he crooked his feet round so much while he used the brush that he nearly twisted them off. Then he had to get Rosa to fix his tie."

"And this is only Saturday noon," observed Shipley. "He couldn't wait for Sunday."

"Going to knock off for the rest of the day, senator ?" asked Brigham.

"Yes, I have made full time this week. I may be away soon."

"O, how sad," exclaimed Birdie.

"What is sad, you girl ?" asked Thornwood.

"Why, the idea that you may be so far away that

you can't go into the country every week or two to see your girl."

"What puts it into your head that I go to see any girl? Can't I take a walk at the end of the week after being cooped up in an office the rest of the time?"

"How innocent," put in Biggins.

"Men don't generally black their shoes and put on their best ties when they just go on a pleasure walk and don't expect to see anyone," said Rosa, the younger sister.

"There," chuckled Brigham. "You gave yourself away, senator."

"Got any horseradish about the place?" asked Shipley. "The senator is going to leave."

"Plenty of it," replied Birdie. "And I am going to put him up a bundle of onions so he can weep whenever he looks in the direction of—what is the place, Mr. Thornwood?"

"Echo answers what."

"No, echo don't answer at all."

"No, Birdie," said Brigham, "he won't need no onions. Whene'er he gazeth toward the northwest, briny tears will drop down his vest."

"Briggy," asked Thornwood, "why don't you write poetry? Such talents as yours should not go to waste."

"O, I just rose to the occasion, didn't I, Ed?" inquired Brigham with a punch of his elbow at Shipley.

"M-m."

"Some one spok'n to me?" asked Brigham pointing his fork toward his neighbor and making a grimace.

"No, it's just another cabbage-head busted," ob-

served Romine as he held up a glass to be refilled with milk.

"M—m," repeated Shipley.

"Young man, where do you board?" demanded Brigham, whirling half way about and blinking at Shipley.

"M—m."

"If I had time," said Romine, "I'd come over there and clean out the whole shooting match."

"Will you have some honey, Wait?" inquired Birdie, addressing the last speaker.

"Yes, honey, if you please," replied Romine, taking the dish offered him.

"O, you—" laughed the girl, making a pretense of boxing the boarder's ears. "Senator," she continued, "why don't you bring her over before you leave, so we can see her?"

"See who?" demanded Thornwood.

"Why, your girl."

"Tell me who it is and then I'll think about it."

"Poor boy, just to think we girls couldn't find out who you go to see."

"You are trying a bluff."

"No, I'm not. You'll see."

"You kids think you're mighty knowing, don't you?" declared Romine.

"H'm, I like to hear you call me kid," said Rosa contemptuously. "Senator," she continued, turning to Thornwood, who was moving toward the kitchen door, "give her my love."

"Here," yelled Romine, as Rosa went flying into the kitchen with Thornwood at her heels. "Keep out of there. Can't allow you to chin the cooks."

Presently the boarder reappeared with a steaming mug.

"There comes the hot water again," said Brigham. "Shave 'em smooth. Let me put in a bid on the new house."

"I'll furnish the engagement ring," threw in Shipley.

"And I'll print the wedding invitations, and do it out of friendship," added Romine.

"Boys, you make me sick," exclaimed Biggins.

Yet the carpenter was not to ill to attack his dessert and call for a second cup of coffee.

"Send me a piece of the cake," said Birdie.

"Give me a lock of your hair before you become her-r-n," added Rosa, as the dining-room door closed after the retreating figure.

Before beginning work in the office, Thornwood visited Gladetown, but Emma was then absent. His next trip into the country was to visit other acquaintances. He was now going to make a further attempt to see Emma and learn the cause of her silence.

It was nearly supper time when he came to his destination.

"Come over with me," said Mr. Brandon, whom the visitor encountered at the entrance of Harley's store. "And you too, Mahlon."

"I ought to be starting home," remonstrated Mahlon.

"Time enough. We have an early supper to-day. And then you'll have something to travel on."

"Just as you say, then."

Mahlon walked alongside his host and Thornwood brought up the rear. He did not see Emma until

they were called to the supper table. He could not catch her eye. She did not appear her former self. She was silent, quiet, and under a self-imposed restraint. The conversation at the table was quite wholly between Mr. Brandon and his guest. Emma, when not waiting on the table, sat as far away as possible and said as few words as she could. Thornwood's appetite vanished and he made a very slim pretense of eating. After the conclusion of the meal, the other men remained but a few moments in the house.

"Will you stay a while?" inquired Mr. Brandon, as with his hand on the knob he turned toward his other guest.

"A short while," was the reply.

Thornwood had made many mistakes in his day and he now made another. Emma seemed a long while in clearing away the dinner dishes. He thought that out of courtesy she would come into the sitting-room and give him the desired opportunity to speak. So he remained there, holding little Mary on his knee and talking with her.

"How do you like the new clerk?" he asked, as Emma was passing the open door.

"Well enough," was the uninterested reply.

"Mary," said Emma some moments later in a tone of command.

The child left Thornwood and went into the dining-room. Emma closed the door.

"I will wash your face and do up your hair," said the older sister.

"Wha' for?" demanded the child. "I's fix up."

"We are going over to cousin Clate's and you want your pink dress on."

"I do' want go t'day," objected the little girl. "Mitter Torn'ood's here. I want him to pay on 'e organ."

"You've been talking in there a long while. Now we'll go put the pink dress on."

"Mitter Torn'ood's all lone," pouted Mary. "I want to tay."

"Come now, Mary," said Emma in a firm, decided tone.

Thornwood heard the sisters go up the stairway, yet he did not suspect the result and was not prepared for it. They presently descended the steps and the outer door opened and closed. From his chair by the window Thornwood saw them pass out through the gate and go down the street. This action passed through him like an electric shock. He was stung to the quick. His breathing grew short and fast, but there was no other sound in the room save the low ticking of the clock.

Thornwood's organization was not of a coarse-fibered pattern. The unexpected conduct of Emma was no trifling matter in his eyes. For a moment the very world seemed to fall into chaos before him. It almost seemed to the man as though some malignant demon were determined to snatch away his wages, to humble him in every possible manner, and to exult over the havoc wrought in his tenderest feelings. His partially avowed affection for Emma had been a powerful incentive to toil and strive, and if this incentive must needs be torn away, it was like seeing the very ground cut from under his feet.

"I shall make no farther stay in the village," he reflected. "I'll go to Bruce's. Perhaps I can pull

myself together against I get there. Good by to Gladetown."

But Thornwood used a very liberal amount of time in going through the fields, and it was after dusk when he arrived at the home of his friend. In crossing fences he would linger on the top rail and look aimlessly about, scarcely heeding the objects of the landscape.

David Bruce was at home and greeted his friend with his usual smile of welcome. He started up a conversation and did not let it flag, but with the visitor it was a constant effort to keep his mind on the thread.

"Come on to supper," said the matron, opening the dining room door.

"You must excuse me," declared the guest, who was unwilling to admit that he had already gone through the pretense of eating a meal.

"Don't see how we can do that," expostulated David with a laugh.

"You can't think of going without supper," added the mother with a wondering look.

"You wouldn't want me to go to the table when I can't eat," said the guest.

"Walked a dozen miles and not ready for supper," exclaimed David. "Well, unless you are on the sick list, better sit up with us anyway."

Finding it useless to decline, the young man went to the table, where he was shown no mercy by the kind-hearted entertainers.

"Eat your supper," insisted Mrs. Bruce, seeing Thornwood lay down his knife and fork.

"You really must excuse me this time."

"The crows will be picking your bones if that is

all the supper you can manage," remonstrated the mother.

"I think I shall cheat them for a spell."

While they all sat around the evening fire, a basket of the few remaining apples was brought in, and again his innocent torturers prevailed on their guest to impose a further burden on an appetite that temporarily had flown.

That night he was not aware of sleeping a wink. The clock in the room below told off the hours without a break, and the slow passing of the intervals from one stroke to another seemed exasperating. The man rotated, first to one side and then to the other, and he left the bed in a thoroughly tumbled up condition.

The next noon found him again at Kingwood, quite calm and collected, and rather stern. Thornwood could not see why Emma should expect him to appear as he did, unless he were ready to explain the mystery of the unanswered letter. He felt that he had been rudely repulsed. His pride forbade any further attempt at an explanation. He declared his acquaintance with Emma was at an end.

"My fight with the world has been going against me," was his reflection. "Well, I must set my teeth and make a fresh effort. And—there is something I must try to forget."

"How's Emma?" asked Rosa at the hotel dinner table.

Thornwood was the first to finish his meal, but he had not risen from his place.

"Wouldn't she let you stay any longer?" inquired Birdie.

These questions came like stabs and they made the victim wince.

"What Emma?" he demanded.

"Your Emma," persisted Rosa.

"Little children should be seen, not heard."

"Yes, I'm very little; weight most a hundred and twenty," said Rosa ironically and making a face.

"You are jealous; that's the trouble with you."

"You're right I am," replied Rosa giving Thornwood a pat on the cheek.

The man sprang out of his chair and attempted to chase the laughing girl into a corner of the room, but the long table made it easy for her to keep out of his reach.

"Children, children," exclaimed Birdie. "Senator, you behave."

"Don't I always behave?"

"Not very often."

"Senator," inquired Shipley, "I beg your parsnip, but have you decided on the style of ring?"

"Yes, a fifty turnip diamond ring."

"Why, I always carry them in stock."

"How about the house?" asked Brigham. "I want to be figuring on it."

"Then you may figure on a King Anne that will cost not less than one thousand and not more than one hundred."

"That's easy done. I have the plan of just such a one here in my vest pocket, and the lumber all cut and fitted ready to put up."

"Is that in your vest pocket, too?"

"Young man, who set you up without trimming your ears?"

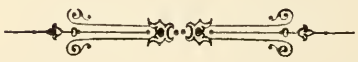
"And I am ready to get to work on the invitation notices," said Romine.

"I'll address them for you," added Birdie.

"You are very thoughtful, indeed, the whole of you," remarked the target of all this raillery.

"Yep," echoed Shipley.

"Don't forget," said Rosa, "to give me just a few days' notice, so I can make the wedding cake. And say, shall I put any sour grapes in it?"



## XXIV

### Patriotism Has a Reenforcement

> Our country's welfare is our first concern.—*Havard.*

Before Thornwood had closed his term of school, the grim specter of a gathering war-cloud was seen beyond the shore of the Southland. Its premonitory thunderpeal had reverberated with the speed of lightning to the farthest corner of the great republic. The battleship Maine had been blown up in the harbor of Havana; a war fever stirred the American nation, regardless of section or party; the impending clash of arms was everywhere discussed.

In Preston county the war spirit burned high. On her hills and in her valleys was a phenomenal percentage of veterans of the civil war. The same patriotic fire which had moved them was now manifest in the younger generation.

Before leaving Bruceton, Thornwood had considered the matter of enlisting in the army, but he had not convinced himself that such was his personal duty. Yet he had discussed the topic with several of his acquaintances.

"I'd like to go to the war," remarked a burly man with whom he was one day conversing on the village sidewalk. "But here's the way things is with me. I've got a woman and five kids; none of 'em near growed up. They can't run the farm, and when you go to hiring help you might as well go fishing for all the good your place will do y'. Sol-

dier pay ain't big and wouldn't go far enough under the circumstances. If I got killed, the whole shooting match there at home would get eighteen dollars a month. If I come back all crippled up, I might get a pension that would be bigger perhaps. But then there wouldn't be no able-bodied man either way to look after things. Now there's some of our young fellers and single men that's not tied up in that shape, and they are the right ones to go. I'd go yet and make no bones of it, if the govermunt needed all the men it could get."

"I have a notion of enlisting," remarked Thornwood.

"Well, I don't know," returned his companion. "You're younger'n I be, but there's others younger still. I hearn you say you got nothing but what you make, and of course you want to set up a home some day. Soldier's wages is no big thing unless you get in as an officer. We have to look at them things. When everybody who can ought to go to war and there's no two ways about it, then it's another matter."

Maurer was another friend with whom the subject was discussed.

"I wouldn't be in any hurry about going," said he. "And I'll tell you why. There's our schools. There's several of our teachers that talk of enlisting and that will make room for new ones. And these new ones will need preparation. There's too much raw timber in the teaching force anyway. Some persons down in this end of the county would as soon go to school here. It is cheaper than going to Kingwood or Terra Alta. And then it isn't everyone that's capable of teaching a summer normal. You

were a stranger among us last summer. Now you are well known, and favorably known, and I believe you'll do better. As for me enlisting, I can't think it's my duty. I'm not overly stout and I'm the only one of the boys left at home."

"But unless I can do no better," replied Thornwood, "I hesitate to run the risk of another summer term. My expenses are as much for a slim school as for a full school. I doubt if I would command more patronage this summer. I was a stranger last season, it is true, but you know a new broom sweeps clean. A few months ago you did not talk as though the schoolroom was my proper place."

"I know that," admitted Maurer, "but that's the way with two-thirds of us that teach."

During Thornwood's visit with Bruce, the war, now a reality, was the leading subject of conversation.

"It isn't going to be like a domestic war at all," said Bruce. "Only a handful of us out of the whole nation will need to go into the army. Those who stay at home will hardly realize that any war is going on. Of course, if the country was in great peril, our people would rise like one man. But the government will get all the men it needs, and we'll hardly miss them, either."

The loss of his winter's evenings moved Thornwood toward a favorable decision. But the blow that came during his visit to Gladetown was the factor which turned the scale.

It was not a feather's weight to make the scales oscillate a while in the balance. It was a positive decision and it bore down the beam with prompt en-

ergy. The man's thoughts were very busy during the rapid return to Kingwood.

"Yes, I'll go," he inwardly remarked with grim determination. "I believe it's my duty as much as any man's, and I shall not shirk it. If Emma won't let me explain, I may as well be away. If I live to come back, I can at least begin life again where I leave off now. The change to camp life will be a breathing spell."

On his return to the hotel, Thornwood found a swarthy-faced man sitting on the porch. It was Ernest Waldstein, a fellow teacher.

"I hear you are going to enlist," remarked Thornwood.

"Yes, I'm going into the army," replied Waldstein with the air of one who had settled the question. "I have rented my place and expect to go in a few days. I have been getting several others to join me. Better fix to go along."

"I shall enlist if they'll take me," was the quiet, firm response.

"You've had some hard luck," said Waldstein. "Uncle Sam will take care of you while you are in his service."

It is not essential that we relate how Thornwood failed to get into the First West Virginia, the regiment which Waldstein joined. He returned to his printer's case to await another opportunity. It was not long in coming. A second regiment was raised, and Preston furnished a considerable part of one of its companies. Shortly before the voluteers were to report at the state capital, Thornwood made a brief visit to Grant district.

During the walk to Bruceton, the prospective sol-

dier was halted by a man sitting on a load of hay.

"Just from town?" he inquired.

"Left there early this morning."

"What's the latest? I haven't saw any papers for three days."

"There is not much that is really new. They say our people have the Spanish fleet penned up in a corner."

"That's good," exclaimed the farmer. "I hope they'll knock thunder out of it, like old Dewey did out there in the Philippian islands. Didn't he everlastinly bust things?"

A little farther on, Thornwood came to a field of corn, in which a man, a woman, two girls, and a boy were hoeing. All were barefoot.

"Hello there, Mr. Thornwood," said the farmer. "Drop that bundle and come on over. We'll find a hoe for y'. You may want some corn cakes this winter."

"Can't stop now. I'm going to the war."

"That so? Well, good luck to y'. But say, have you saw a late daily? We only get the county paper at our house."

"Yesterday's paper, and it's in my pocket."

"Would you mind posting us up a little bit?"

"Not at all."

Thornwood climbed over the fence and sat on a rock while he read the news to the assembled toilers, all of whom suspended their work.

"I'm an old soldier," remarked the head of the family. "It does me good to see the country united as the hills once more. This war just stirs up a fellow's blood and brings old times back to mind. I'll never forget when the One Hundred and Forty-Eighth

Regiment met at Kingwood to train. The war with the South was breaking out just then. We went from the training ground to a grove a little east of town, and formed a hollow square, several hundred of us. Then we all knelt down and took the oath to be true to the Union. It was an impressive scene, you better believe."

In front of a store in Bruceton was Calvin Steepleton seated in his farm wagon.

"So y' going to join the Second Regimunt?" he remarked. "Well, I honor y' fer it. Can't y' come out with me while yer down this way?"

"Yes, I'd be pleased to, only I can't make much of a stay."

"A little is better'n none," replied Steepleton. "When I was a young chap, I helped take a drove o' cattle to Cumberland I was coming back with a young fellow that's a Quaker and stayed all night with 'im. That was Saturday. I was going on the next morning, but the old man said, 'No, thee may go to church, but thee musn't make any journey on the Sabbath.' So I say like he did, thee musn't go back without seeing us. I'm going out right now."

The younger man hesitated a moment.

"Yes, I'll go now. I've had a long walk. There's a friend I was just going to see, but I'll go when I come back here."

"Your girl?" suggested the farmer. "Yes, they are expected to stand first, but she can wait till you get back to the village."

Thornwood returned to Bruceton in the morning and went immediately to the Emmons farm, where during the winter months he had not been so frequent a visitor as before.

The old log house in the woods had never seemed so restful or inviting as it did this summer morning, when he would have to take leave of it for many months, and perhaps for all time. Dewdrops were still sparkling on the trees and the faint murmur of the creek came through the intervening screen of wood. Lucy appeared from the sitting-room a few moments after he had taken his seat on the porch.

"I saw some one coming in on the road a little bit ago," she remarked. "I couldn't tell at first but it was a stranger, and I had on my work dress, and so I skipped. I was making an apron out here. But must you go all the way to Kingwood this hot day? Then if you can't stay to dinner, I will go back in and get you a dish of sarvisses with sugar and cream on them. We have a whole gallon in the house."

"Lucy," remarked the young man, when he had put aside the dish, "I am going to enlist in the Second Regiment. We are to leave Kingwood day after to-morrow."

"I honor you for going," replied the girl. "I sometimes think a good many of our young men are not overstocked with patriotism when it comes to the test."

"Perhaps that is more apparent than real," declared Thornwood. "The life of the nation is not at stake, and the number of soldiers called out will not compare at all with the armies of the civil war. All realize this, and so some stand back, waiting for others who they think can go better than themselves. I will admit it was a good deal so with me until lately. I have read somewhere that the essense of true love is sacrifice, and if one can't go to some little

inconvenience to serve his country, I don't believe he thinks enough of his native land."

"And while you and others go to the front to expose yourself and get only a soldier's slim pay for doing it, others who stay at home will measure their patriotism by the money they can make out of government contracts. That was too bad about your loss in the store robbery. You never told me of it."

"It was not pleasant to tell."

"I suppose it reconciles you all the more to going into the army."

Thornwood hesitated to reply, and the girl saw he had been touched in a sore spot. Lucy was sympathetic and Thornwood knew this. With a woman's ready tact she turned the conversation in a way that was grateful to him.

"Do you know there is another poem on the West Virginia Hills besides the one we sing so much ?"

"Yes, but I never saw it."

"I have it here. It's an older poem and by a different person. I have the music, too. It is real patriotic and I am going to give you the slip."

"I will thank you ever so much for something to remind me of home," replied the man.

Lucy disappeared into the house a moment and brought back a small leaf on which Thornwood read the following lines :

Oh! the West Virginia hills, the West Virginia hills,
That round my childhood home forever stand ;
How I love the lofty crags, the rocks and gentle rills
That tell me of my native land.

Oh! the West Virginia hills, the West Virginia hills,
With wealth and beauty, truth and grandeur crowned,
Where the fruit of honest toil the grateful garner fills,
And wisdom holds her seat profound.

Oh! the West Virginia hills, the West Virginia hills,
Thó' other scenes and other joys may come,
I can ne'er forget the love that now my bosom thrills,
Within my humble mountain home.*

"Lucy." said Thornwood as he refolded the leaf, "will you write to me?"

"Certainly I will."

"Honest?"

"Yes, honest. What makes you doubt me?"

"I don't mean to doubt you. I have experienced disappointment along that line, and I could hardly help speaking the way I did. I shall write very soon after I get to camp, and if you don't hear from me I don't want you to think I didn't write."

"And I won't think so. If you don't get an answer prompt, you must believe it wasn't because I didn't drop a letter in the office. I like to write letters, and I believe I can write tolerable good ones. And then I like to get letters. What if I should get long-winded sometimes?"

"That would be a very good failing,"

"I shall consider it a pleasant privilege," said Lucy, "to write and receive letters from one who wears the blue."

The girl had become too interested in the conversation to continue her work.

"You believe it a good thing for a soldier boy to have letters from home?"

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*By D. B. Purinton, President of the University of West Virginia and a native of Preston county. This poem is the original "West Virginia Hills" and was composed by Dr. Purinton in 1877, when he was an instructor in the University. The song, of which there is a portion quoted on page 122, is of later date and was composed by Rev. D. H. King.

"Indeed I do," replied the girl with kindling eyes. "I have heard some old soldiers tell what lots of good was done by letters from home, even when they came from girls who were strangers to them. I remember an old soldier—he was from another state and stopped one night with us once—I remember him telling how the letters cheered them up. He told how packages sent to them in the army would sometimes contain letters that would be slipped in by the woman who put them together."

Thornwood had one foot on the ground. He was on the point of leaving, but was slow about getting under way. Lucy stood by a pillar of the porch. She took down a braid from her hair, snipped off a small lock, and tied it with a bit of ribbon from her work basket. The color was rising to her face.

"Do you want this to keep you in mind of the West Virginia hills?" inquired the girl with a sly glance at the prospective soldier.

"And a West Virginia girl," added Thornwood unclasping his pocket-book. "Yes, indeed, I shall certainly treasure it."

Just how it came to happen, the young man could never explain. But the next instant his arm was stealing around the girl's waist and he drew Lucy toward him, imprinting at the same time a whole-souled kiss on her tempting red lips.

"O, Mr. Thornwood," exclaimed the blushing girl. "I didn't say you might."

"If it isn't all right, you can cuff my ears. But, Lucy, I wanted to show a better appreciation for that token."

Thornwood's ears were not cuffed.

## XXV

### A Few Letters Out of a Bunch

> To write a good love-letter, you ought to begin without knowing what you mean to say, and to finish without knowing what you have written.—*Rousseau.*

Charleston, W. Va., July 4, 1898.

My Dear Friend—Here we are, at the state capitol, in camp, and mustered into the military service of Uncle Sam. This is the first opportunity I have had to write. Now I will try to tell of our trip and of how it seems to be an enlisted soldier.

Just imagine in the first place several carloads of young fellows, as gay as if they were going to a picnic. The boys were full of life, and, I am sorry to say, about half full of liquor.

It is a long, roundabout ride to Charleston, as you will see by the map. It makes one think West Virginia is quite a state after all. It was nine o'clock at night when we got here, and we began at once to have a taste of soldier life. A camp had been arranged for us and our tents were set up. The state furnished us bed sacks—which is another name for ticks—and bales of straw, and we made our beds on the ground. We have been having some very hot weather—hotter than it gets to be on the hills of Preston—and it didn't go bad at all to sleep outside of a house.

When it came to getting breakfast, some of the boys were as helpless as a chicken in a tub of water.

There were the camp stoves to set up and wood to cut. We had meat and potatoes, bread and coffee. You would think that sort of breakfast an easy one to get up. It would have helped matters if more of the boys had had a few primary lessons in the art of getting their own meals when occasion calls for it. Now, Lucy, when a boy wants to try a little of his skill in the kitchen, don't you go to making fun of him.

The captain looked me up and said, "Thornwood, I understand you used to cook for yourself at one time?" I told him his information was correct, and then he said I must go over to where there was a crowd of the boys and help them hammer out their steak on a slab and get breakfast.

Then I was detailed as a clerk to help make out the muster rolls. It was the afternoon of Sunday, and I went with Charley Fox to the capitol, clear out on the other side of the city. We sat there in the hot senate chamber till late at night, working on the rolls so the men could be mustered in on the Fourth. We were as tired as all get out and had no supper till we got through. Then we were taken to a restaurant at eleven o'clock. The captain wanted to get his company in at the head of the regiment, and that is why we were in such a rush.

Monday we were examined and sworn into the service. We stood in line with hands raised up, and swore an iron-clad oath to defend our country against all enemies whatsoever Now we were United States soldiers and had to begin drilling. Before that, we were in the state service and could do about as we pleased. The officers had been good to the boys, for

until the mustering in they could desert with impunity.

There is lots of enthusiasm in the camp. Everyone seems to want a chance to get a lick at the Spaniards. The news from the seat of war is getting lively. I have written quite a letter and now I shall have to close. From your soldier friend,

JAMES W. THORNWOOD.
Sergeant Co. —, 2d W. Va. Vol. Inf.

CAMP MEADE, Pa., Oct. 12, 1898.

MY DEAR FRIEND—It was quite a leap from our own state capital to a point only a few miles from the capital of Pennsylvania. Now we are at Camp Meade, at Middletown, on the Susquehanna. There are many other regiments here, and the camp runs several miles up and down the stream. And what a stream the Susquehanna is. A person does not know what a river is who has never seen anything bigger than the Cheat or the Yough. The channel is almost wide enough to hold fifty Cheats. There is a splendid farming country around here. It is very thrifty and thickly settled.

I would have written sooner than this, but we are just back in camp after an absence of twenty-two days. We marched through Harrisburg, Carlisle, Gettysburg, and Columbia. But we were not marching near all the time. At Gettysburg we camped a week on the battlefield and it is a very interesting spot. I shall tell you more about it in another letter. If all goes well, some day I can show you photographs of that historic field.

You can hardly imagine how the signing of the peace protocol has taken the edge out of our soldier

life. So long as the war was actually going on, we didn't grumble much at the drill or our privations. We wanted to get to the front to show our teeth to the enemy, and we didn't care to wait long either. Our officers looked forward to distinction and promotion. But now peace is in sight and the bottom has been knocked out of our military aspirations. We must stay in camp and drill till we are discharged, whenever that may be. Drill has become a bore. We go through our daily routine from a sense of duty. The enthusiasm has gone out of it.

The Spaniards seemed to get all they cared for when Dewey put their ships to soak at Manila, and Cervera's fleet was knocked into scrap-iron at Santiago, and the land forces run out of their trenches.

We may be sent to Cuba for garrison duty. That has been talked of. We may even go to the Philippines—no telling.

You might not understand all our camp language. Bread is "punk," potatoes are "spuds," coffee is "java," and pork of course is "sow belly." There is considerable fever in camp, but some of the boys who have what they call a "jerk with the doctor," contrive to get sick enough to have thirty days sick leave. That is called "furlough ease." But some can't get sick enough. Perhaps the people around here will be willing to see the soldiers leave for good. Chickens, watermelons, etc., have a habit of disappearing.

Who will teach the Bruceton school? Has Tressler been around with his stereopticon lately? Have you had a husking bee at your place yet? I would like to have a chance at some Preston county buckwheat cakes. It is getting about time for them now.

Wont you pass me over a few—no, not a few, but a whole lot ? From your friend,

JAS. W. THORNWOOD.

GREENVILLE, S. C., Nov. 25, 1898.

MY DEAR FRIEND LUCY—This, as you know, is Thanksgiving Day, and here we are in the Sunny South, 487 miles from Washington. We arrived this week, and the day we came was a day to be remembered. It is one of the last things I shall ever forget. Greenville is quite a town and we marched through the main street with our bands playing "Dixie." The people here were very devoted to the Confederacy, and the old familiar song stirred up their enthusiasm to high-water mark. They swarmed out and lined the street, and the more they cheered the more snap our bands threw into their playing. We are counted as a Southern regiment and that makes us all the more popular with the people. You ought to have heard them shout, "There are the Virginians! There come the Virginians!" And your correspondent an Ohio boy by training and Virginian only by birth. Didn't that come a little close to sailing under false colors, so far as I was concerned? But our march into the city was an event of a lifetime.

There are six regiments here. There are two camps—one on each side of town. Our camp was made in a cotton field. The ground was plowed, leveled and rolled. We burned up tons of cotton stalks, just to get them out of the way. If you want to have some idea what a cotton field looks like when the cotton is ripe, just imagine the field beyond your house set out in milkweed plants in regular hills and

rows, and the milkweed bolls burst open, showing the white silk.

It looks entirely different here from West Virginia and a good deal of that is owing to the darkies, who are to be seen everywhere and at every time. You would almost think the country was black.

The captain's wife bought our Thanksgiving turkeys—six small, skinny turkeys for one hundred and five hearty boys. Just think of that, will you? But then it was turkey, and it made us think of home and of the big slices we would have had there. We gave three cheers for the captain's wife.

Write soon again to your army friend,

JAS. W. THORNWOOD.

BRUCETON, W. VA., Dec. 25, 1898.

DEAR FRIEND—O yes, I was very much frightened to get an answer to my last letter so soon, and I thought I would punish you in the same way. This is Sunday afternoon and it will soon be time to stir round in the kitchen and put some of our turkey on the table. Come over and help us eat it. Or shall I send you a good big slice and a piece of warm mince pie? If you will be real good and write as soon as you did last time, I will throw in a piece of my raisin cake. I think that will fetch you.

There. It was real mean in me to say what I did just now. I ought not to tantalize you so, when you had such a slim Thanksgiving dinner. But somehow the words came before I thought, and—you wouldn't want me to go back and start a new letter, would you?

We were up to church this morning and heard

Rev. Westman preach one of his good sermons. He don't give us any poor ones, you know.

This is Sunday and Christmas all in one, and it don't seem just right to have them both come together. It is a dead loss to the poor schoolteachers. There was a tree last night over in town and we all went. We had a nice time, though there were not so many presents as I have seen on some other occasions. What were mine, did you say? I had a nice blue flannel waist all ready made. It came from Aunt Liz. You are perhaps not interested in wearing apparel for ladies, but then you may be—sometime—and if I get you broke in now, it will be easier for you. Then I had a set of bracelets from Cousin Lyman, and a holiday book from the Sunday school. It was the "Bonnie Brier Bush." I have begun reading it and like it real well, though it is hard for me to get hold of his Scotch dialect sometimes. I hope you got my little gift all right and that you will take the will for the deed that it wasn't better. Yours came in last evening's mail. It was just in time, and ever so many thanks to you for your kind remembrance.

Do you see any of the caps down there that the children are wearing this winter? They call them Klondike caps because they are made something like those that are worn in the Arctic regions. They come up in a peak behind just like a horn. Then I have something to remind me of where things are green, even if they are not green here. I am hooking a rug and the center design is a bunch of orange leaves and blossoms that I took from a card that came from Florida. When I get to looking at it, the weather don't seem so cold.

Our snow is gone, but down there in the Sunny South you must have it lots milder than up here in these cold mountains. It was cold enough, though, along about ten days ago. It got below zero a night or two. A sled-load of us went out on a straw ride to Mr. Hornbeck's, and he set his phonograph to going and played a lot of pieces on it. That was fine. Then we drove over on the west side of Sandy to Frank Austin's. The Austin girls were all home, and some other young people were there that I don't think you know. We just had a ga-lorious time. But it was biting cold coming back.

I forgot to tell you that Mr. Wallace gave a lecture to the Odd Fellows in Bruceton a few nights ago.

Well, I believe I have told you about all I can think of, this time, and I hear the poker rattling around in the kitchen stove. So I must close, hoping you have had a merry Christmas and wishing you a prosperous and happy New Year. From

LUCY.

P. S. Can a girl finish a letter without a postscript? There's to be an ice cream and oyster supper at Bruceton this Wednesday night coming. It's for some charitable purpose or other. Did you say you would take me there? L. B.

BRUCETON, W. VA., April 3, 1899.

MY FRIEND THORNWOOD—I hope you will pardon my unintentional neglect in replying to your last letter. During the last weeks of my school I was quite busy and now spring work has come on.

We hear that the Second West Virginia is one of the regiments that will soon be turned loose. I hope so, at all events, and I also hope you may be with us

again before long. It seems a long while since you left this part of the country, and in fact it is a whole year. How the time goes! You will find most all of us here and all will be glad to see you. We will give you a warm welcome home.

The last Grant District Farmers' Institute was quite a success. The schoolhouse was hardly big enough for the crowd. Those who came out this time think we ought to hold them more regularly. I think so too. They will make our farmers more progressive. I send you a clipping from the Plain-dealer, which tells you what the program was and what was done. But perhaps the paper comes to you anyway.

I had a little vacation before my term closed and was over in Valley district two days for the first time in my life. I saw a few of my institute acquaintances. I was in Gladetown a part of a day and a night, and met some of the young people of that place. The big meeting had not closed. I walked down street with your one-time flame, Miss Emma Brandon. I got to talking of you and sounded your praises considerably, for, innocently enough, I assumed that your relations with her were still what they had been. She gave a little laugh and said, "I reckon Mr. Thornwood don't think much of me any more." That was all she said. Her manner was not spiteful at all, but I feared I had made a break by introducing an unwelcome subject. She told me she was going to her cousin Virgil's the next day. There was fever in his family and no one could be found willing to go there.

The paper will tell you of the recent wedding in our midst. And it was only day before yesterday

that Adam Prent and Margaret Crolley were joined in the bonds of hemlock. That took our people by surprise. After your return I presume it will be J. W. Thornwood and Miss ——.

Shall you not stop in Washington and see that city as you come here? I wish I had such an opportunity. Very truly your friend,

G. E. Reger.

Greenville, S. C., April 4, 1899.

Dear Lucy—We hear that we shall be discharged in a few days. That means home once more. Well, our war visions got nipped in the bud. For ten long months we have drilled just as we would do any other task work. We have had to salute officers every day who we do not consider any better than the general run of ourselves. We went out to fight and have not had a chance. But it is not our fault, if we have been disappointed.

Would you think many of the boys are going to re-enlist and get into the regular army? There is after all a romance and fascination in army life after one has been in the army a long while. One gets used to the life and then the boys form a great many acquaintances among those from other states. This ought to make them more liberal minded. One of the New York regiments was recruited from the Bowery. We speak of them as "Bowery bums," yet we have good friends among those very fellows.

It is quite spring-like here, for of course the season is much earlier than up in Preston. Yet we have found a good deal of delusion in the phrase, "Sunny South." We didn't see much of the sun all through the winter. There were cold, wet, cloudy skies

right along. It was no "Land of the Sky" to us. The streets of the town were muddy all the time.

I shall take with me many pleasant recollections of the Southland, but I shall like home better than before. This country looks poor to us. The soil is light and many of the plantations look shiftless and scaly. There is a sameness of scene all the way down through this Atlantic coast plain. Sleep several hours on the train, and then look out of the car window and you see nothing new. There will be the same little stations made up of a telegraph office and a few shanties, and there will be the same pine woods and starved-looking fields lying all around.

Please write soon, so I may catch your letter before we leave. From your soldier friend,

JAMES.

## XXVI

### The Soldier's Dream

> Oh, the heart that has truly loved never forgets,
> But as truly loves on to the close.—*Moore.*

James Thornwood lay dreaming in his tent and his dream bore him back to the hills of West Virginia. The vista which opened before him in the hour of slumber was one of peace and rural quiet. There was no suggestion of military parades and martial music; no hint of marches and encampments. The broad valley in which he first saw the light lay unfolded before him like a landscape from the summit of a lofty tower.

The sleeper viewed again the broken contour of the Alleghany highlands. He gazed upon the cone-shaped knob, with the natural terrace bulging from the mid-side, the broad fence climbing the sharp acclivity, and the cattle and sheep grazing upon the grassy slope. He saw once more the rolling stretches of table-land, the smooth, green glades, and the deep, laurel-filled gorges, through which turbulent streams of crystal clearness were rippling over rocky beds. He beheld the shapeless fields lying like patches in a crazy quilt amid the embosoming forests of oak and chestnut.

In this panorama there was no dividing line between the season of flower and the season of fruit. The element of time was unthought of and unfelt. The picture was complete and harmonious. The

dreamer saw at once the small, white bloom of the service tree, the large, white-petaled flowers of the dogwood, and the pale-green, pendent spikes of the chestnut. In the woods were the fern and the wild honeysuckle. In deep hollows were thickets of rhododendron, resplendent in their gorgeous array of large, pure white flowers. Towering above these snowy flower-banks rose the deep green, arrow-like top of an occasional pine.

Meadows were bespangled with the clover and the daisy, the dandelion and the buttercup. Pastures were whitened by masses of blackberry canes in the full tide of bloom. Here and there was a spot carpeted with the finger-leafed May apple, either bearing its white, cup-shaped flower or pendulous with its lemon-tinted fruit. The sleeper's eye then rested on a field of the heavy-scented buckwheat, whence came the roar of legions of honey-bees eagerly at work. Another glance into the kaleidoscope would reveal the yellow flowers of the goldenrod, fit sign of the maturity of summer.

The tinkling of the cow bell fell upon his ear and he saw calves congregated in the shady fence corner. He observed the saucy squirrel racing along the fence rail and the hen-partridge coming forth angrily from her covert. The chattering guinea hastened out of the roadway and the squawking goose strode toward him with upraised beak.

He saw the old, low-built farmhouse inclosed within its picket fence. In the shade of a huge spreading oak was the walled spring, with a cocoanut shell lying on the capstone. The owner was hauling a sledload of hay to his barn, while the housewife was stirring a kettle of apple butter over an outdoor

wood fire. Children, bareheaded and barefoot, were running through the yard. In the distance lay a cluster of houses and in their midst was the spire of the white church. Issuing thence, the soft tones of a bell came floating over the meadow, wafting along, as it were, the fragrance of the new-mown hay.

And over the radiant landscape was the bright summer sky. The morning sun looked down on the wavy outline of Laurel Ridge and gave a warm glow to the forest-covered dome of Pine Swamp Knob, the pinnacle of the mountains of Preston. As the monarch of day rose higher into the heavens, he robbed the leaves of their glistening dewdrops and scattered the fog-wreath that hid the meadows of the Sandy and filled the canyon of the Cheat. The warm, pure, tonic air began to move in a gentle breeze, and in the fields of grain and grass it bent the surface in wave-like undulations.

The sun sank to the rugged brow of the westward range. Tiny masses of vapor, like tufts of cotton floating in the air, were drifting lazily toward the place of sunset. The slumbering man watched the play of colors called into being by the waning light. Through bright-bordered rifts in the gray horizon-cloud, the beams of the expiring orb shone upward in widening rays and touched with gold the snowy cluster. But soon the gathering cloudlets put on the tints of the orange, the rose, and the violet, while in the imprisoned islands of clear sky, there seemed a blending of the blue of the firmament with the green of the forest-clad rampart below.

There was a movement of the panorama. The dreamer was transported to a merry picnic throng. He saw the basket dinner spread upon the grass, and

LOOKING EAST TOWARD LAUREL RIDGE Phot'd by C. S. Rexroad

PINESWAMP KNOB IN THE MIDDLE DISTANCE

he broke a sprig from a service tree to share with a white-dressed girl the burden of red berries. But the forms in this crowd were shadowy.

There seemed a moment of darkness and the man was now plodding wearily through drifting snowflakes toward a light which came through the windows of a house. He knew the house, for it was the home of David Bruce. He knew he would find a welcome as warm as the fire that glowed from the hearth.

But he did not reach the doorstep. There was another change and it was again the hour of summer twilight. The planet Venus, queen of the starry vault, was glittering in the west. A flock of turkeys had gathered under a tree. Some were craning their necks upward, while others were alighting heavily upon the lower limbs.

Then the sleeper looked from a sidewalk toward a red-painted village home. The front entrance was open and the tones of an organ were given to the calm evening air. In the dooryard were the lilac, the snowball, and the Easter lily. There were crimson poppies and portulacas and there were climbing vines. A young woman was culling some flowers. Her face was turned away, but he knew it was Emma. He at once recognized her by her trimmed hair and her checkered dress. She held up a flower and he could see it was a forget-me-not. He was about to speak and call her attention. He had already put his hand to the gate latch.

But at this moment he stirred uneasily and awoke. There was no shadow on the pictures he had seen. The dream did not link itself with his last visit to

Gladetown. Neither did it call up the recollection of his misfortunes.

The grim reality now rushed upon him like a frightful specter. The man gave utterance to something like a moan. He knew he was in his tent in the Southland. He knew the cool, damp air was the air of the Palmetto State. He knew that in the light of the pale moon he could see without only the smooth, sandy fields and the background of monotonous pine woods; the airy, weather-beaten plantation house and the squalid negro cabin; the small, lean cattle and the two wheeled farm cart.

The soldier had dreamed of his chosen home and of the one he had loved. He would gladly have tried to believe the dream was the reality and the waking was the dream. Yet the bright-hued vision of the dream-world was only a phantom. There was the same gulf between him and Emma; his hard-won savings were still beyond his reach and his deferred hopes were still an unwelcome fact.

Then his thoughts went to the old log house near the banks of the Sandy. He could hear the murmuring of the creek, and the chattering of birds in the trees which embowered the house. He could see the row of hollyhocks near the yard gate. He could inhale the fragrance of the honeysuckle and the wisteria. He could see Lucy sitting at her work on the porch and singing her favorite song.

With his waking visions traveling between Emma and Lucy, his mind began to work very earnestly in this still, quiet hour before the coming of dawn. He had declared that he must cease to think of Emma, although the decision had cost him a mighty effort. He now believed that some inward monitor had been

telling him there was blame at his own door. He had never meant to trifle with Emma's affections, yet he was not sure but that he had done so. He wondered whether in her case he had not committed the unpardonable offense spoken of by Maurer.

But had he not put himself in the attitude of trifling with Lucy? He had sometimes tried to think that the kiss he took on his farewell visit need not be considered in the light of a serious intention. He wrote often to Lucy, yet he never sealed a letter without feeling, that with a will to the contrary, his missive was nevertheless lacking in warmth. He had already asked himself whether Lucy did not have doubts as to whether he really cared for her.

The disquieted soldier soon worked himself into a frame of mind.

"I have meant all right," was his conclusion. "But they say the road to the lower regions is paved with good intentions. I shall not let my actions belie my feelings any more."

Then the man's thoughts turned to the problem of his lifework. Had he yet solved this question, or had he indeed come any nearer to a solution?

Naturalists tell us a log of wood may be so honeycombed by certain forms of insect life, that it becomes a mere shell and may be crushed with a blow. Thornwood turned a search-light upon himself and he discovered a shell. As he lay on the ground he suddenly woke to a realizing sense that some of his early ideals had fallen into ruin. Yet new and better ideals were ready to spring into their place. His present hour of calm reflection was the touch that broke down those faulty standards. He could now see they had been undermined largely through the influence

of several of his mountain friends. This influence had been a silent leaven. It had turned his thoughts into new channels. He could see quite clearly that which hitherto he had seen dimly. He perceived the dawn just before leaving his home at Neil's; he now beheld the coming of daylight itself.

Thornwood now felt quite weaned from the home of his youth. This was largely because of the new friends toward whom he felt drawn as by hooks of steel. It was instinct which really drew him to the Alleghany highlands, and it was intuition which made him tarry. There are many ways in which a person may be radical or conservative. The strenuous life that is so extolled by some, did not appeal to Thornwood. He somehow felt that a more tranquil environment would better fall in with his own powers and limitations and better enable him to fulfil his proper mission in life.

The young man had spent two years in his mountain home, and although his earnings had been small, he had never lacked for employment whenever able to work. Then why should he have any greater fear for the future? Why not identify himself more fully with the people who had welcomed him to their midst? And if there were a field of usefulness at home, as Bruce and Maurer had pointed out, why not do personal work in the direction of an uplifting influence?

God comes to those who wait, yet strive while they wait. Thornwood knew he was not a genius. He had never been moved by a conviction that he was one of the elect few who are born for great things. He knew he belonged to what are termed

the common people, and that he should live in touch with them.

But the common people possess high ideals and fine ambitions. Yet these ideals and ambitions are not always a moving power. They are often tucked away in the hidden recesses of the heart. They may even lie quite dormant, being well-nigh smothered by shallowness, frivolity, and even grossness of thought and speech. Nevertheless, these elements of a better life exist. Occurrences which seem trivial will bring them to the surface. The sudden and even unexpected ways in which they manifest themselves are often observed by students of human nature. The veneer under which they are sometimes masked is often thinner than it looks. It may be a foil to a real seriousness of purpose. These ideals are given to man that they may live and breathe. The degree in which they become a living force is the measure of true civilization. Men rise by putting aside their weakness. by believing in good things and in their power to attain them. They may rise in a more enduring way than by civil preferment or by the acquisition of wealth.

The recumbent man reflected on the thoughtlessness of his soldier companions and on their frequent want of a fixed object in life. He reflected on the improvidence of that bread-winner who spends his wage as fast as he earns it, whether it be ample or meager. These traits are a heritage of that barbarism which lies deeply rooted under the brilliant exterior of our latter-day civilization. It is because of aimlessness that the crowd smiles at the man who says he has a mission. But it is the intended mission of every person, whether endowed with one tal-

ent or with a hundred, to do his humble part in leaving the world somewhat better than he finds it.

Earnestness, thoughtfulness, aimfulness; these are basal exponents of true advancement. These qualities make for good habits, useful lives, and genuine success. But the industrial whirlpool of this unfolding century supplies a rather giddy atmosphere for these qualities to thrive.

Thornwood had himself lacked singleness of purpose. He had also been selfish without knowing it. He had sought to live too much within himself and for himself. Like many another American he had never worshipped wealth nor sought it. He had already seen that if wealth be the standard of success, it is few that can possibly reach it. But like many of his fellows, he did seek escape from stringency, so that he might truly live and not simply exist. His fault was in looking too fixedly on his goal of material welfare. While pursuing the shadow he was neglecting the substance. His earnings had been rudely snatched away, but he had gained what was of greater value. The discipline of adversity had brought him to the threshold of success. He had found that for which he was groping. He could now discern a guiding principle which would enable him to see his lifework more clearly and follow it with new resolution.

Dawn was at length melting into daylight and the man was still communing with himself.

"I used to think I knew what I wanted, but my vision was not clear and I wabbled about. In point of time I have been thrown back, but I have learned some valuable lessons and I may now make up in speed. There is other work than farming that I can

do to better advantage. I am not a money-catcher and I must make my living without the help of capital. I see possibilities in me now that I did not suspect, and I shall pitch into the new line with hammer and tongs. I want a country home, and a humble one is all right. I am going to have books and papers around me and improve myself. I intend to be a public-spirited man and useful citizen."

This day Thornwood received two letters. The one was from George Reger and the reader has learned its contents. The other was from the postmaster at Kingwood and had the following import:

KINGWOOD, W. Va., April 5, 1899.

MY DEAR THORNWOOD—I inclose a letter which came to this office more than a year since. Through some accident which I confess myself unable to explain, it has been here all this while and was not found until a few moments ago. The handwriting on the envelope looks like yours. Under the supposition that it is your writing, I have concluded to send the letter to you instead of to the party addressed. If the letter is not yours, I will trust in your sense of honor and ask you to return it by first mail. Very truly yours,

W. W JAMES.

This was the superscription on the inclosed envelope: "Miss Emma Brandon, Gladetown, W. Va.

"Now I begin to see," thought the soldier. "Emma believed I did not write, and she took it as a cruel blow. Why didn't I write a second letter? It would have reached her. And my attempt to get a chance to explain was nothing but a half-hearted effort. I shall write a full explanation and inclose this letter. I shall tell her I will make a personal

explanation after I get back, but I am not going to name any certain day for going to Gladetown. Then if she won't listen, it won't be my fault. But the self-sacrificing girl may be down with fever. Who knows?"

He at once addressed a letter of inquiry to Mr. Neil.

## XXVII

### The Turn of the Tide

> Patience is bitter, but its fruit is sweet.—
> *Rousseau.*

One bright morning in early May Thornwood was once more in the county seat of Preston. He was now wearing citizen's clothes, and he had halted on the edge of the sidewalk before the court-house that he might read a letter he had just received. There had already been a prompt reply from Mr. Neil, assuring him that Emma had not been prostrated by the scourge of the mountain land.

The town seemed more than ordinarily quiet to him and but few persons were in sight. Yet most of their faces were familiar. Mr. Leaman, the proprietor of the white store across the street, was comfortably seated in an office chair by the entrance. His tall clerk, Will Edley, was leaning against the door frame. George Huff, one of the frequenters of the post-office, was standing on the platform outside the door, his head tipped to one side and one arm on his breast. Henry Clyde, a lawyer with an erect bearing and who affected a broad-brimmed hat and a cane, was coming down the street to his office over the Magaw building. Mr. Courtney, another lawyer, a man of compact frame and square shoulders, came out of the court-house with a document in his hand, and hailed his fellow attorney as the latter was about to ascend the stairway leading to his office. On his way to the post-office, Dr. Fitzwalter was passing

Squire Tripp, an old gentleman who walked with a long staff. A young man wearing a striped sweater was riding a wheel.

Thornwood's letter was from Maurer and we quote a portion of it for the benefit of the reader:

"I saw the trustees of the Bruceton school and you are all right. You can have it next winter if you want it. In fact, I don't see why you could not teach there indefinitely, because you stand in well with the people. And after this, I don't believe there will be any trouble about a regular summer term. I have talked this up with several people, and they all say you ought to be supported in it.

"And another thing. Why couldn't you arrange with Mr. Black to be a regular local agent for him down here? I believe you could clear a month's wages every year in that way."

As Thornwood was putting the letter into his pocket, he was accosted by Jeff Green.

"Why, how are you, Thornwood? I saw you pass up the street a little while ago, but didn't have a chance to hail you. Going to stay with us?"

"Yes, so far as I know."

"Glad to hear it. You see our town is improving. We have electric lights now and new sidewalks. No better ones can be found anywhere in the state. A mile and a half of paving blocks laid down, and quite a number of our buildings newly painted and otherwise fixed up. Then go up on Beverly Hill just now and look down over the town and you'd think it was one big apple orchard. It's a mighty pretty sight."

"It certainly is," replied Thornwood. "It looks very homelike. Sometimes, while I was away, I

wished for a sniff from our fields of clover and buckwheat."

"But see here," exclaimed Green. "You can get a sniff right now of something I don't believe you had down there. See that fire smoldering away on the top of Briery Mountain? There's a good breeze from that quarter and it is scented with the pennyroyal the fire is burning up."

"I had noticed something fragrant, but did not think it came from there."

"That's what it is," said Green. "But, man, turning out your mustache improves your looks fifty per cent. Why don't you have on your uniform? Danged if you wouldn't be irresistible with the girls. Well, there's Joe Black hailing you. I'll see you again. Come round to the office."

Turning his head, Thornwood noticed in the passage way between the court-house and the Magaw building the small, spare figure of Joe Black and the huge, broad-shouldered form of a portly stranger. The editor beckoned Thornwood and the ex-soldier approached him.

"Sergeant," said Black, "let me make you acquainted with Mr. Scully. He wishes to talk with you. Mr. Scully, this is Mr. Thornwood."

"Glad to meet you, sir," said Scully with a very polite bow. "Walk up with me into my office, please."

The office of Mr. Scully was close by, and like that of Mr. Clyde, it was reached by an outside stairway. But as the big man put his hand on the rail, he was accosted by a stout, red-faced person coming up the cinder path that lies between the two buildings.

"How's things stand now, captain?" inquired the last comer.

"All right, sir," exclaimed Scully, raising his fist and bringing it down on the rail. "As for that matter over south, we are going right on with it. You may depend upon that, sir. I am just back from Philadelphia and all arrangements have been made. Work will begin next week and money will be passed out. Everything is just as we want it. Take my word for it, sir."

After this vehement reply, Scully proceeded up the stairway and deposited his immense frame in an armchair.

"You are a soldier boy no longer," observed the man of business. "Don't think of reenlisting, do you?"

"No, sir, I have not very seriously thought of that. I don't care to go into the regular army. Cuba has been freed, and I prefer to come back into civil life. It was different with some of the younger fellows. When they were turned loose, they saw old acquaintanceships about to be broken off, and they hardly knew what to do with themselves. They had no special object in sight. The old world seemed too dull and tame, and many of them are reenlisting. They may go to the Philippines and see what we did not see—regular fighting."

"I hope your regiment behaved well in camp?"

"I don't think we suffered by comparison with others. In some of the regiments were rough, turbulent men, hard to control. The citizens of Greenville had a good opinion of us and we tried to deserve it. They petitioned for our regiment to remain on guard duty as long as possible."

"Have you any arrangements for the present?" asked Scully, whose thoughts seemed to dwell more on his business than on what Thornwood was telling him.

"I expect to begin a summer school at Bruceton next month."

"Then see here, Mr. Thornwood. I can give you some employment that will fill in the gap between now and then. Joe Black recommends you very highly. The work we want is to examine some lands in the north end of the county and take coal options. You are considerably acquainted down there, I understand?"

"Yes, sir. When do you want me to begin?"

"This very day," replied the big man, pounding the table with his fist. "The work is all right and the pay is sure—one fifty a day and expenses. Ask Mr. Clyde about it. Perhaps we can give you a more permanent job. Times are brightening up right along. We have things to suit us now, but there have been delays to worry one like the d—I beg your pardon, Mr. Thornwood, I was impulsive. You will need to be here in town a half day and get posted up."

"I will undertake the work, Mr. Scully, only I shall have to ask an extension of time to to-morrow noon. I have personal matters that I wish to see about and I have just arrived."

"That will be all right, Mr. Thornwood. Thank you, sir," replied Scully with profound courtesy.

When Thornwood was going down the stairway, he was confronted by a man on the cinder path. The stranger wore a soft black hat and a dark suit, aad he was now puffing very zealously at a pipe with

a long stem. His beard was full and inclining to gray, and his dark eyes were wont to scan very closely the face of the one with whom he chanced to converse.

"I believe this is Mr. Thornwood," he observed. "I was in search of you. Wyman is my name."

"Yes, I know you by reputation, Mr. Wyman. I am glad to meet you."

"You did not hurry back after your discharge," pursued Wyman.

"No, I took three weeks for my return. There were some circumstances which were calculated to draw me back as soon as I could get here, but on the other hand I concluded to avail myself of an opportunity that I might never have again. So I went by steamship to Boston and took my time in coming back from there. I visited New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, and Richmond, and also stopped off at some other points to do some sightseeing. I made the longest stay in Washington."

"You did right," said Wyman. "That trip was an education in itself. You will always be the better for it. It was well calculated to broaden and liberalize you. How are you situated in regard to employment for the present?"

"I have just made a short engagement with Mr. Scully. Then I already have the promise of a fair amount of patronage for a summer school at Bruceton. That will fill in the time until institute week. I expect to teach again at Bruceton in the winter, but there will be an interval of at least ten weeks after the institute, and that interval is not provided for yet."

"I can very quickly point you to an advantageous

engagement for the interval you speak of," replied Wyman. "I have noticed your letters from Bruceton and your letters in the Plaindealer that you wrote from camp. They were well written. You use good language. Joe Black has shown me some of your copy, and I find it looks as well in the manuscript as it does in print. You punctuate correctly and prepare your manuscript properly. Now there are in preparation some historical reminiscences and other matter, all pertaining to this state. There is a good deal of field work to be done. We need some help and have been casting about to see who we could find. We selected you. You are inexperienced in that line, but would soon get used to it, and we feel satisfied we would have to look a long while before we could do as well. I will post you up all that is necessary. If it suits you as well as I believe it will, there will be some work for you every season as long as you choose to follow it. The work will pay you as well as teaching for the time you spend in it."

"Very well," replied Thornwood, "I will gladly accept."

And as he took the road to Gladetown a few minutes later, he made this remark to himself: "Now I see my way quite clearly. I begin to feel that I am master of my situation at last."

In two hours Thornwood caught sight of the lone tree on the summit of Potato Hole, and a little later he could see the white houses of Gladetown nestling in the valley beyond. As he came nearer the village he could detect almost no change in its appearance. Outwardly, it looked just the same as it did three years before.

But would it appear quite the same on a fresh acquaintance? There had been coming and going and there had been deaths. In the composition of the school there would be a very noticeable change. The old days, as they really were, could never more be lived except in memory.

There is an almost pathetic phase in the swarming of the young from the hamlet. We first see a crowd of young people full of the buoyancy of youth. They play together on the school ground, hunt for berries and nuts, and enjoy their parties and picnics. In a few years they are scattered to the four points of the compass. They have taken places among the world's toilers, and the freedom from care they once knew is forever gone.

## XXVIII

### Fenmore Makes a Guess

> But stars approached become more bright,
> And home is life's own star.—*Bowring.*

Almost a half year had elapsed since Thornwood's return. Guy Fenmore was crossing the main street of Morgantown when he saw George Reger coming down the sidewalk on the farther side. The sun had just set and numerous lights appeared on the street and in the business buildings. The dry October air was tonic without being chilly, and the sidewalks were thronged with people of all ages.

"Why, how are you, Guy?" exclaimed Reger. "When did you get in?"

"Not half an hour ago. I didn't get an early enough start. It's a long drive over here from the other side of Preston. I brought over some stuff, and then I had some other business besides. Gus Tibley come over with me. He has a place in the glass works."

"The industries over here are bringing in lots of Prestonians," remarked Reger. "But say, Guy, what are your arrangements for staying over night?"

"Haven't made any yet. Fact is, I am not quite through with my errands. I want to start back tolerable early in the morning."

"Come up to our fort and have supper and stay with us," pursued Reger.

"Fort?" echoed Guy inquiringly.

"Yes," said the other with a laugh; "that's what

we university students call a boarding club, or rather, the house where the club takes its meals. We can find room for you up there."

"Well, all right," replied Fenmore. "I'll come up and stay over night, but I brought my snacks along with me."

"Better get your legs under a table and sit down to a regular meal," remonstrated the student.

"O, that's all right, George. But say," continued Fenmore, in the high-keyed voice he assumed when he became interested, "you have quite a city over here; paved streets, electric lights, and natural gas lights. Why, the business blocks are lighted up brilliantly. And stores strung all up and down this street. And then see the people! Some life in this town sure enough."

"Yes," replied Reger, "we are quite citified over here. This place is slightly ahead of Bruceton. Why, there's enough here from Grant district alone to more than fill up another Bruceton. Mr. Wallace has been in town several days making some researches in the university library. He generally comes down street about this time for his mail. Why, here he is right now."

In another moment Daniel Wallace had joined the group and shaken hands with Fenmore.

"Have either of you heard from Thornwood lately?" inquired Fenmore.

"I have," replied Wallace. "He is a member of our corps that is getting up this historical work."

"What is the latest about him?" asked Reger.

"I met him on the road this morning," said Fenmore.

"What did the old fellow have to say for himself?" pursued the student.

"Why, we had quite a chat. You know he had some hard luck before he enlisted. It was a harder time than I knew of. When he first come to Bruceton he was strapped. He had let all he had go to pay a security debt that he didn't have to pay, but done it as a matter of duty. Then he got hurt, you know, and his earnings at Bruceton winter before last were stole from him. But he hadn't been back from the army twenty-four hours before he had employment in sight for almost a year. While he was taking coal options, he made a deal on his own account that more than covered back what he lost by the robbery, and he scarcely had to turn his hand over to do it either. Then in the summer his surety money come back. Nothing extraordinary in all all that, of course, but it come in mighty convenient. It almost makes him feel rich. You know he bought that little Milford place above Bruceton. He was able to pay down for it, and now he's having it fixed up. Says ever since he come back he sees a straight course ahead of him and now he can work with a will. He has got started into a line of work that just suits him."

"I'm glad to hear all that," remarked Reger. "Thornwood has pluck."

"Yes," said Wallace, "he has won his way against adverse circumstance and proved his mettle. That will make him a valuable citizen. Grant is his ancestral home, it is true, but his having grown up elsewhere, and his recent travel and observation, all combine to make him more useful than if he had clung to one spot all his days. You people over

there ought to recognize these things and treat him well. It was sentiment, largely, that brought him back to the hills. He has acquired a real attachment for our country and now don't let him regret it. There is too much pettiness in the world—too much. It often permits ability and experience to pass unrecognized."

"Our people will use him right," declared Reger. "I believe we have a right progressive section over there. We have farmers' institutes and the teachers have local institutes. Then we are beginning to have school libraries and the farmers talk of organizing an insurance society of their own. There is no reason why, as time moves along, we shouldn't put Thornwood into some local offices. I look for him to be sent to the state legislature some of these days. But now I must run in for my mail and then go up to supper."

"I wish you would inquire for me," said Wallace. "I will stay out here and chat with Fenmore."

"All right," responded Reger as he darted into the post-office. On his return he waved a square envelope before the newcomer's face.

"Guy, did you tell all about Thornwood—all?" he inquired.

"Why, yes, all I know. But—gee whizz, that's a wedding invitation."

Reger nodded, while into the countenance of Wallace there came a knowing smile.

"Wonder if there isn't one for me back at the home office?" exclaimed Fenmore.

"No doubt of it," replied Reger. "You have a warm place in his heart for your kindness to him when he was hurt."

"But who is the other party? Who is she?" asked Fenmore insistently.

"Now, old fellow, you've got to do some guessing. As for Mr. Wallace, he seems to know already. Put on your thinking cap, Guy."

"I'll have to study some on that," remarked Fenmore.

The young man put his hands in his pockets, looked toward the pavement, and compressed his lips.

"Well," he said at length, in a tone that indicated that he was none too sure of his ground; "I'd say it is one of two. It's either Lucy Beckett or that girl over at Gladetown who they say jilted him—Emma Brandon, I mean. Well—I'll say it is—"

And here the young man bent forward and whispered a word that was heard by both listeners.

"You are right," said George Reger opening the inner envelope.

"And I am not surprised either."

THE END